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Nick Carter Stories

THE DEADLY PARALLEL
OR
NICK CARTER'S HIDDEN CLEW

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THE DEADLY PARALLEL;

Or, NICK CARTER'S HIDDEN CLEW

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN AND MISSION.

"We must be mighty near Alton by this time. It strikes me, chief, that we had better mug up before entering the town."

"That is my intention," said Nick Carter, replying to the sententious remarks of his junior assistant, Patsy Garvan.

"Our quarry might get his lamps on us," Patsy added. "It would be all off, chief, in that case. He would bolt for the antipodes by a hole straight through the earth, if he could find one. That would be going into one's hole, for fair."

"Some hole, too," laughed Chick Carter, the famous detective's right-hand man.

"Well, he'd know that we are out to get him, all right; that nothing else would have brought us into these parts; and Hobart Goff would rather have the devil after him, close on his heels with a hot pitchfork, than to know we are even looking for him."

The "parts" referred to, viewed from the powerful touring car in which the three detectives were seated, including Nick's chauffeur, Danny Maloney, consisted of a gray country road winding through a beautifully wooded section of western Massachusetts, whither they had come since noon that October day on a mission of grave importance presently to be disclosed.

It then was half past six. Daylight was giving way to the dusk of early evening. The woods on either side hid from view the more open country they were rapidly approaching, also the near town mentioned by Patsy, and herein fictitiously named, one of the most attractive and fashionable summer resorts nestling amid the beautiful Berkshire hills.

Nick Carter laughed at Patsy's dry observations, while Chick more forcibly declared:

"That's too true for a joke. If Goff really is in these parts, Nick, as you suspect, and gets his evil eyes on us, there will be no chance of our getting even half an eye on him. He'll bolt with bullet speed."

"Don't be so sure of that," said Nick.

"Aren't you?"

"Not by a long chalk. Goff is not an ordinary fly-by-night criminal. He is almost in a class of his own. He is crafty, clever, and remarkably versatile, with a genius for devising new and original schemes, and with all the confidence and daring required to execute them. He acquired a profound knowledge of drugs and chemicals during his career as a patent-medicine maker, moreover, and knaves possessed of such knowledge are always dangerous."

"That's very true," Chick admitted.

"No less accomplished a rascal could have escaped from the State's prison over the route that he laid out and successfully traveled."

"True again."

"The smuggling in of a drug to him on the border blanks of the newspapers allowed him, some infernal stuff, the taking of which, by chewing and swallowing the impregnated parts of the papers, gradually produced all of the physical symptoms of serious mental derangement, so serious as to insure his transfer to an asylum for criminal insane—well, that was going some for a starter."

"Going some, chief, is right," said Patsy.

"The obtaining of an antidote, presumably from the same outside confederate, and later a slender stiletto treated with a poison so virulent and quick in its action that he could put out three of his guards unheard and make his escape, leaving them dead, and with every muscle as stiff and hard as if ossified—— By Jove, it would have seemed almost incredible."

"Impossible, chief!" declared Patsy.

"No wonder the State authorities want him badly enough to have started us on his trail. Take it from me, Patsy, such a rascal does not always bolt when threatened."

"No, not always."

"Besides, he would give something to break even with us for having twice foiled his knavish schemes and sent him to prison," Nick added. "He would take some long chances, believe me, to get back at us. He might not bolt nearly as quickly as you think, therefore, if he were to happen to see us."

"I guess you are right, chief, after all," Patsy again coincided. "He might lie low to down us, one and all, before legging it for safety."

"Quite likely."

"All the more reason, Nick, why we should guard ourselves against identification," said Chick. "There is nothing in going openly up against such a bad egg."

"Very true," Nick admitted. "We will slip into a disguise, all hands, before entering the town. We will register at the hotel under fictitious names. Our car will not betray us, being nearly new and a different make from the one we had a year ago, when we sent Goff up for the abduction of Claudia Deacon. There really should be nothing, in fact, to betray us to the miscreant, should we find that he is indeed in these parts."

"Do you base your suspicion entirely upon the recent attempt to kill Mr. Abner Hopedale?" inquired Chick. "Have you any other reason for thinking Goff is around here?"

"No," said Nick. "That's reason enough."

"On the theory of the deadly parallel?"

"Well, in a measure, Chick, if you fancy that way of putting it."

"Don't you?"

"Hardly."

"Why so?"

"Because I have no great faith in the theory of some of the leading criminologists, including even Bertillon and Nordau, that the operation of subtle and extraordinary forces, the cause and nature of which they admit are not understood, occasions the duplication of every striking and original crime in which the elements of strong passion, superior intellect, and unusual premeditation, motive, and execution are displayed."

"Well, I'm not so sure," Chick replied. "There are many cases——"

"Oh, I'll admit that parallel cases quite frequently occur, sometimes almost simultaneously, in which the character and details have almost incredible similarity," Nick interrupted.

"Yes, surely."

"But consider the vast number of monstrous crimes that have no such parallel," Nick added. "The odds are a hundred to one. That would not be the case, Chick, if any such subtle law existed as that of crime duplication, or the deadly parallel, as some express it."

"Possibly not."

"Nature's laws are stable and invariable. There would be no exception."

"But you said this morning, after reading of the recent attempt to kill Mr. Abner Hopedale, that the deadly parallel quite plainly indicated that Hobart Goff is in these parts," Chick reminded him. "That's what sent us up here."

"I used that term only casually," Nick explained. "The newspaper item stated only that the Honorable Abner Hopedale, a very wealthy and prominent resident of Alton, had recently had a narrow escape from death at the hands of an unknown assassin, who is suspected of having flooded the sleeping room of his intended victim with illuminating gas by means of the meter valve, stopping and then resuming the flow of gas, the victim invariably sleeping with a dim light in his bedroom."

"I remember," said Chick. "That is about what the item stated."

"It added that he awoke in time to escape asphyxiation, and that it is not positively known that the suspected crime was attempted, the light possibly having been extinguished in some accidental way."

"True. I remember that also."

"And that is all I know about it," said Nick. "We do know, however, that Hobart Goff originated and adopted precisely that method, or set one of his tools to do so, in order to kill Doctor David Deacon, the cancer specialist, and steal the secret formula for making his famous remedy."

"Certainly."

"He killed the specialist, but we prevented his getting the secret formula. It was a novel and original method, and the fact that it has been repeated here in Alton and since Goff's escape from prison a month ago, leads me to suspect that he is back of this attempt also, if the attempt really was made. That seems much more probable than that another person would have hit upon the same novel method."

"That seems logical, chief, for fair," declared Patsy.

"And that is all I mean by saying that the case might be a deadly parallel," Nick added. "If I am right, however, there is another point that must not be overlooked."

"What's that, chief?"

"If some unknown person really attempted to kill Hopedale and has succeeded in getting away unsuspected, he will not be content with that. He must have had had some very strong incentive. He will repeat the attempt in some other way, as sure as you're a foot high—unless we contrive to identify and prevent him."

"That may depend upon our finding Hobart Goff."

"Exactly."

"We might warn Mr. Abner Hopedale of his danger, Nick, and tell him of the parallel case, and how Claudia Deacon afterward was abducted by Goff and——"

"There is no need of ringing her into it," Nick interrupted. "She has had troubles enough. She now is happily married to Frank Thornton, of whom Goff twice has made a mark, and they are fast becoming wealthy from the sale of the cancer remedy which her uncle discovered. Thornton is——"

"Oh, by thunder!" Patsy exclaimed, interrupting. "Talk of angels, they say, and you hear the sweep of their wings. If that is not Thornton coming through the lane, chief, I'll eat my bonnet."

Nick glanced in the direction indicated, then said quickly:

"Stop here, Danny. You are right, Patsy. It's Thornton himself, as sure as eyes are eyes. But why such haste? He appears to be in a devil of a rush."

Danny brought the touring car to a quick stop.

Speeding around a long curve in the road while the detectives had been speaking, they had emerged from the

thicker woods, and in view of a much more extended landscape.

The town they had been approaching suddenly loomed up in the near distance. Its most desirable residential outskirt was less than half a mile away. Off to the left, the belt of woods still continued for a considerable distance, with the roofs and chimneys of scattered dwellings discernible beyond the trees.

Stretching away to the right and beyond a few scattered oaks and pines, through which ran the lane mentioned, were the extensive private golf links of some wealthy resident. The scattered red flags and verdant putting greens still could be plainly seen in the waning daylight. The lane diverging from the road that the detectives had been following, led to a small, dark-red building a hundred yards from the road, evidently a sort of clubhouse on the extreme east side of the links.

Flanking the road on the right for a considerable distance was a deep orchard of apple and pear trees, then laden with ripening fruit. Beyond could be seen a long glass conservatory, a stable and garage, and still farther away a large colonial dwelling, half hid amid surrounding elms and beeches.

Obviously, this entire estate was that of some very wealthy resident, occupying an extreme outskirt of the fashionable town and covering many acres.

Nick was much surprised to see the man of whom they had been speaking, and who then was running quite speedily through the narrow lane; but it was evident that Thornton had not observed the touring car, though it caught his eye when he came nearer the road, and he immediately recognized its occupants.

"Good heavens!" he shouted, waving his hand and hastening to join them. "Is it you, Nick Carter, and Chick, Patsy, and Danny—all hands, in fact, here in Alton? I can hardly believe my eyes. How are you, Nick? I'm delighted to see you. But what on earth sent you to these parts?"

Nick did not inform him. Instead, while Thornton stood on the running board of the car and eagerly shook hands with all, Nick replied evasively:

"Merely touring this way. I might ask you the same question, Frank. What are you doing in these parts?"

"Oh, that may be told with a breath," Thornton cried. "I am here for a week's outing with my wife. We are visiting friends who own the big colonial house yonder."

"Whose place is it, Thornton?" Nick inquired.

"It is owned by the richest man in town, the most wealthy in these parts, in fact. His name is Hopedale—the Honorable Abner Hopedale."

CHAPTER II.

A PREDICTION VERIFIED.

Nick Carter betrayed no surprise upon hearing the name of Thornton's host, and his assistants were too well trained to do so. It impressed all as a remarkable coincidence, nevertheless, that this young man who twice had been a mark for Hobart Goff's knavish designs now was visiting the very man whose narrow escape from death presented a striking parallel with the murder case in which Thornton had figured nearly two years before.

Nick noticed, too, that Thornton, who was clad in a golf suit and cap, not only was in haste, but also appeared to be somewhat disturbed, aside from the excitement occasioned by the unexpected meeting with the detectives. Pretending to be oblivious to all this, however, Nick said carelessly:

"The Honorable Abner Hopedale—it strikes me that I have heard of him."

"No doubt, Nick, no doubt," Thornton said quickly. "He is very wealthy, worth a couple of millions, at least. He has twice been an M. C. from this State. He now is in the seventies, however, and has been out of politics and business for a dozen years."

"How did you happen to know him?"

"He was attacked with cancer of the stomach five months ago, and came near dying, but he now is well on the road to complete recovery."

"Your remedy?" questioned Nick tersely.

"Exactly," said Thornton. "He turned to that when the physicians gave him up as a hopeless case, and he soon began to recover. He will be as well as ever in a couple of months, barring his age. He feels very grateful to us, Claudia and me, and insisted that we should visit him for a week. That's why we happen to be here."

"Has he a family?"

"Only a nephew and niece, who have lived with him since childhood. They are cousins, children of his younger brother and sister, who both died years ago. He never married. Will you stop in Alton till to-morrow?"

"Yes, at the Oakwood."

"That's the best house," said Thornton. "It gets the most fashionable people. I wish I could invite you to come with me, but I hardly feel at liberty to do so."

"No, no; certainly not."

"I'll bring Claudia to call on you this evening, however," Thornton quickly added. "She will be delighted to see you. We are prodigiously happy since our marriage. You'll excuse me, now, won't you? You see——"

"What's your rush?" put in Nick, smiling.

"Well, I'm late to dinner, very late," Thornton hurriedly explained. "I've been playing a round at golf with Gordon Boyd, Hopedale's nephew, and should have returned with him to the house if—well, something happened to prevent. I was on my way when I saw you. Expect me this evening with Claudia, unless you have other plans and——"

"No, nothing of the kind," Nick interposed. "I wish you to come."

"We'll do so, then, as soon as—great guns! What was that?"

There could be no mistaking it. It arose with piercing shrillness on the still air—the irrepressible shriek of a frightened woman.

It came from the direction of the golf links, drawing every eye that way, and a slender, graceful girl in simple afternoon attire was then seen running wildly through the lane toward the touring car, which she evidently had discovered immediately after she screamed.

"Good heavens!" gasped Thornton, turning pale. "It's Hopedale's niece, Laura. What has happened? Why is she——"

He did not wait to say more, but ran to meet her. They were only a few yards from the road, within easy hearing of the detectives, and the girl then cried hysterically, amid welling sobs and tears:

"Oh, help me, Mr. Thornton, or I shall faint. Uncle Abner is dead—dead!"

"Dead!" gasped Thornton, supporting her. "Impossible!"

"Yes, yes, I am sure," moaned the girl excitedly. "I came out to seek him when he did not return to dinner. I just found him—oh, this is terrible! He is lying near the old well—dead! I am sure—sure! Oh, what shall I do? What shall I——"

An interruption came from Nick Carter, who had signed for Chick to follow him from the car.

"You must compose yourself, Miss Hopedale, to begin with," said he, gently taking the arm of the hysterical girl. "We are friends of Mr. Thornton, and you must let us assist you. Persuade her, Thornton, to let Chick take her to the house while we look into this matter. She may be mistaken, possibly, and haste is imperative."

"Thank you—I understand," sobbed Laura. "I will go with him and send Gordon out here. Lose no time, Mr. Thornton. I will try to be calm."

She had made the effort and pulled herself together. She was a fair, blue-eyed girl still under twenty, whose refined and attractive face, pretty even in her distress, evinced her sympathetic nature and lofty character. She moved away with Chick while speaking, and Nick then turned quickly to Thornton and said:

"Now, Frank, come with me. Do you know the well she mentioned?"

"Yes. Straight through the lane. It is a few rods east of the golf house."

"That red shack?"

"Yes. Mr. Hopedale walked out there to watch us play a round of holes," Thornton hurriedly explained while they walked rapidly through the lane. "He was sitting alone on the piazza, Nick, the last I saw of him. That was less than an hour ago."

"He did not play?"

"No. His health did not permit it. My Lord, it seems impossible that he can have died as suddenly as——"

"Ah, I see!" Nick interrupted. "This way, Frank, over the wall and through the underbrush."

He had caught sight of the woodwork above the curbing of the well, a square structure of planking about three feet high. It stood about fifty feet east of the golf house, and on some partly cleared land flanking that side of the links.

Nick leaped over a low stone wall on one side of the lane, then plunged through some low shrubbery and dry underbrush, more quickly reaching the spot than if he had followed the lane. He then saw at a glance that Laura Hopedale had made no mistake, that the millionaire, whose life was said to recently have been foully threatened, had, indeed, gone to his last account.

He was lying on his back about three feet from the wall, with his hueless face upturned, slightly drawn and distorted, as if he had suffered a brief, agonizing convulsion in his last moments. This appeared, also, in the fact that his woolen smoking jacket and negligee shirt were partly open, as if he had clutched wildly at his breast during a sudden momentary death pang.

He was lying flat on his back, as stated, amid some low vines and prickly plants a few feet from the well; a slender, aged man with narrow, emaciated features and sparse gray hair, whose general appearance denoted a long period of trying illness. The woolen golf cap he had worn was lying on the ground near by.

Under the circumstances, and in view of the recent newspaper item, Nick at once looked sharply around for evidence of violence. He discovered none, however, then and there. The ground showed no signs of a struggle. There were no footprints in the dry, uneven, vine-covered soil, nor anything denoting that other persons had been there. The victim's garments were in no disorder, moreover, aside from that mentioned.

Nick took in these facts with a few swift glances, then knelt and felt of the dead man's hand. It was quite cold, and fast becoming rigid.

"The girl was right, Thornton," said he, while the latter stood gazing. "This man has been dead for some little time."

"Heavens! it is terrible—terrible!" Thornton answered feelingly. "We were all so hopeful, so encouraged. What could have caused his sudden collapse? His heart, may have been——"

"Stop a moment," Nick interrupted, rising. "The cause in such cases, Thornton, is always a serious question. Though this man may have died from natural causes, there still is the possibility that he did not."

"Good heavens!" Thornton muttered, staring. "You don't mean, Nick, that——"

"Never mind just what I mean," Nick cut in again. "What now passes between us must be strictly confidential. Let me impress that on your mind."

"I understand."

"Before others arrive, Thornton, briefly answer a few questions for me," said Nick. "I read to-day in one of the morning newspapers that this man recently had a narrow escape from asphyxiation, that the gas in his bedroom was set flowing by the same method, it is suspected, as Hobart Goff suggested to Dick Chester, the rascal who killed your wife's uncle. What truth is there in that story?"

"None whatever, Nick, I feel very sure," Thornton hurriedly replied. "Mr. Hopedale did, indeed, find the gas filling his room one night about a week ago, and he was awakened by the odor, and found that his dim light had in some way been extinguished. We were discussing it two days ago in company with a local correspondent of a New York newspaper, and I mentioned the circumstances in the killing of Doctor Deacon. The reporter evidently went so far as to apply the same to this case, probably in order to send in a sensational story. I am sure, as I have said, that there is no truth in it."

"No evidence of it has been found, then?"

"I think not, or I should have heard of it."

"How long have you been here?"

"Five days."

"Have you seen a man resembling Hobart Goff in any respect?"

"Hobart Goff? No, surely not!" Thornton exclaimed. "Good heavens! Do you suspect that he is in these parts?"

"Somewhat," replied Nick. "That newspaper item sent me this way in search of him. Not a word of this to others, mind you. There may be nothing in it."

"Trust me," replied Thornton. "I understand."

"This man has been dead but little less than an hour," Nick added, crouching again beside the body. "When and where did you last see him?"

"I cannot say just how long ago, but surely less than an hour," Thornton replied. "I was playing the last holes of the course with Gordon Boyd, his nephew, which took us to the farther side of the links, beyond the low hill

back of the Hopedale residence. We lost sight of him, of course, after passing back of the hill. He was then sitting alone on the piazza of the golf house, from which he had been watching us."

"You mean the piazza of this red building?"

"Yes, certainly. It was built for the convenience of the players."

"How long had he been sitting there?"

"More than an hour. Gordon left me at the farther end of the course, over there beyond the orchard and stable," said Thornton, pointing. "He went into the house to dress for dinner."

"And you?"

"I had left my watch in the golf house, and returned to get it. I was hastening around to the dwelling by the way of the lane and road when I saw your touring car. I supposed, of course, that Mr. Hopedale had returned home while I was with Gordon in the hollow beyond the hill. I did not so much as glance in that direction."

Nick did not reply immediately, nor continue his inquiries. He had parted the negligee shirt and undergarment of the dead man, and thrust his hand within, to lay the palm on his bare breast.

As he did so, Nick discovered a tiny scratch, scarce half an inch long and hardly breaking the skin. It was as if one of Hopedale's fingers, when he clutched at his heart in sudden deadly pain, had slipped between the opening of each shirt and slightly dug the skin.

"It looks very much as if he died of heart failure," Thornton gravely observed. "He evidently felt a sudden, terrible pain in that locality and gripped himself there, or his shirt would not have been disturbed."

"Yes, I agree with you," said Nick, without glancing up.

"An autopsy will settle it definitely, if the coroner thinks one is necessary."

"It should do so, surely."

"Ah, here comes Gordon, now," Thornton said abruptly, turning away.

Nick saw him do so, saw that he was not observed, and he quickly drew a small but powerful magnifying glass from his vest pocket. Lifting one hand of the body and then the other, he studied each finger tip and nail through the lens for a moment, then returned the glass to his pocket and arose to meet the approaching men.

Chick Carter, in company with Gordon Boyd, followed by the butler and a young man employed as a chauffeur, were hurrying across that part of the links directly in front of the golf house, their feet falling noiselessly on the close-trimmed grass of the putting green.

Gordon Boyd was in advance, a tall, well-built man of thirty, smoothly shaved and having a florid complexion, wavy light hair and gray eyes. He was a fairly good-looking man, though his features lacked strength, his receding chin denoting weakness of character, and his full red lips a sensuous nature. He was very pale, and tears flooded his eyes when he saw the form of the uncle to whom he owed all that life had afforded him, and he knelt beside him with a sob and clasped his cold white hands.

"This is dreadful—dreadful!" he groaned, deeply agitated. "Poor, dear old uncle! My God, it can't be that he's gone—gone from us forever. Dead and——"

"Calm yourself, Gordon," Thornton interposed, laying his hand on the shoulder of the kneeling man. "You know you have my deepest sympathy, but you must meet this in manly fashion. Pull yourself together, dear fellow, and——"

"Yes, yes, I know it," Gordon Boyd interrupted, rising and clasping the other's hand. "Thanks, Thornton, and I'll try to steady myself. Send for Barbette as quickly as possible. Send for Doctor Barbette."

"My car and chauffeur are at your service," said Nick. "It is at the end of the lane."

"Thanks! That's very good of you, Nick," said Thornton. "Shake hands with Mr. Carter, Gordon, and this gentleman who kindly took Laura home is his chief assistant, Chick Carter. You have heard me speak of them."

"Who has not heard of them?" said Boyd, forcing a smile to his pale face while he shook hands with both. "I'm very glad to meet both of you, even under such distressing circumstances."

"You have our sympathy, Mr. Boyd, I assure you," said Nick gravely.

"And I will accept your kind offer, Mr. Carter. "Go at once with his car, Jackson, and bring Doctor Barbette here as quickly as possible," Boyd added, turning to his chauffeur. "You will find him at the Oakwood. Lose not a moment, Jackson."

"Stay!" Nick put in. "Would it not be wise, Mr. Boyd, to have him bring the district coroner, also? Does he reside in Alton?"

"Yes, yes, you are right," cried Boyd, more calmly. "Go to Doctor Paulding's residence, Jackson, and bring him, also. Tell him what has occurred, and he will come at once. The necessary legal steps must be taken, I suppose, before the body can be removed to the house?"

"Yes, certainly," said Nick. "Go with Jackson as far as the car, Chick, and give Danny the necessary instructions. Return here, then, with Patsy. We'll wait to give Mr. Boyd what aid he may require."

"I've got you," Chick said quietly, as he hurried away with the chauffeur.

When he returned with Patsy, he found Nick sitting alone on the piazza of the golf house. Thornton and Gordon were talking earnestly near the body, while the butler had been sent back to inform Laura Hopedale what the circumstances required.

"Gee! this looks a bit bad, chief?" Patsy whispered inquiringly. "It's the very thing we were talking about and which you predicted. Isn't it something more than a coincidence?"

"It looks more to me as if the man died of heart disease, or a shock," Chick muttered. "He——"

"Hush!" Nick cautioned. "Sit close and keep quiet for the present. On the contrary, Chick, unless I am most egregiously mistaken, Mr. Abner Hopedale was—murdered."

CHAPTER III.

DOCTOR BARBETTE.

The episodes described had followed fast on the heels of one another. Though the sun had set in the beginning, daylight still lingered when Danny returned with Nick Carter's speedy touring car, bringing the two physicians who had been hurriedly summoned. They came through the lane to the golf house after leaving the car,

and both Thornton and Gordon Boyd hastened to meet them.

Doctor Paulding, the coroner, was an elderly physician of the old school, and evidently was possessed of a generous endowment of sound common sense, which was somewhat veiled by his quiet demeanor and agreeable manners.

Doctor Barbette was a younger man, apparently in the forties, and of French nationality. He was an erect, square-shouldered man set up like an athlete, and he was very fashionably clad. A costly solitaire glittered on one little finger and another in his cravat. His hair and complexion were dark, his eyes keen and bright through a pair of gold-bowed spectacles, which gave him a decidedly professional look. This was accentuated, too, by his dark mustache and beard, the latter trimmed to a point and effectively masking his mouth and firm, square chin.

Doctor Barbette was the more demonstrative of the two. He clasped Gordon Boyd in his arms and embraced him with profuse expressions of sympathy, evincing their intimate friendship.

"Ah, my dear Gordon, what can I say? Language is inadequate!" he cried, with a slight French accent creeping in at times with his almost perfect English. "Alas! this is too bad, too bad! I grieve with you. I weep with you. My whole heart goes out to you. Command me, my dear Gordon, in your sudden great sorrow."

Gordon Boyd shook hands with him and with Doctor Paulding, then introduced both physicians to Nick Carter and Chick, who had risen and approached them.

Doctor Paulding merely bowed and smiled gravely, eying Nick a bit curiously; but Doctor Barbette extended his hand to the detective, lifting his hat and saying effusively:

"*Pardieu!* this is one great pleasure. It is marred only by the sad occasion. I have known you very long by name, my dear Mr. Carter—but why not, eh? It is known as well in Paris, my home, as in your own magnificent country. Believe me, I am charmed at meeting you."

"Many thanks, doctor," Nick replied, regarding him intently. "I am glad to meet you, also, very glad. If I were a girl, however, your flattery would make me blush."

"Flattery?" echoed Doctor Barbette, with a shrug and headshake. "Really, that is not the word. He lies who only flatters. I speak only the truth, my dear Carter, nor even stretch it one little atom. Pardon! I may aid Doctor Paulding. This is too bad—too bad."

He turned away, bowing and smiling gravely, and hastened to join the coroner, who had approached to view the body and question Gordon Boyd about the circumstances surrounding the fatality.

Nick signed for Chick and Patsy to wait at the golf house, then sauntered out to the well and sat down on the curbing to watch the two physicians and to await the result of the coroner's investigations.

Doctor Barbette stood listening gravely, too polite to interrupt the other's inquiries, with his arms folded and his back toward the detective.

Presently, glancing down, Nick discovered a dry bur clinging to Doctor Barbette's carefully creased trousers. It had caught into the cloth under the bend of his left knee, where the Frenchman would have discovered it only by chance, and Nick reached forward and gently removed it, without being observed, and threw it away.

He then appeared to find Doctor Paulding's inquiries of no material interest, for he arose, after a few moments, glancing sharply around, and presently he sauntered out through the lane to speak to Danny, who was waiting with the touring car.

Twilight was waning when Nick returned, and the coroner had ended his inquiries and a superficial examination of the body.

"There seems to be no reasonable doubt as to the cause of his death," he was saying. "In my opinion, at present, it was due to heart disease. I judge, moreover, that Mr. Hopedale felt the attack coming on. For he evidently left the piazza yonder, where Mr. Thornton last saw him seated, and came to the well for some water, only to be fatally stricken before he could draw any."

"Those are my views, Doctor Paulding, my views to the letter," said Doctor Barbette, bowing while he expressed his approval. "I think you are right, sir; perfectly right."

"You may have the body removed, Mr. Boyd, when you are ready," Doctor Paulding added. "I will make a more thorough examination to-morrow morning. I will perform an autopsy, also, if you and Miss Hopedale desire it, or if I then think it necessary."

"Unless absolutely necessary, Doctor Paulding, I would be very much opposed to it," said Gordon Boyd. "I know that my cousin, Laura, will be equally averse to it. If you think it absolutely necessary, however, we shall yield without any objections."

"I appreciate your feelings, of course," Doctor Paulding replied. Then, turning to Nick, who had paused near by, he added: "What do you say, Mr. Carter? In view of your broad experience, your opinion in this case will be of material weight."

Nick surprised Chick and Patsy by replying directly the reverse of what he had said to them.

"I think you are right, Doctor Paulding," said he. "That has been my opinion from the first."

"Ah! You agree with me, then?"

"Perfectly," Nick replied. "Obviously, the death was not due to an accident. There are not the slightest indications of foul play of any kind, moreover, and I think it can be attributed only to natural causes. I should not hesitate, if I were in your place, from permitting Mr. Boyd to have the body removed and prepared for burial."

"Nor do I, Mr. Carter," said the physician. "You are at liberty to do so, Mr. Boyd. Can we be of any assistance?"

"No, no; I would not trouble you, sir," Boyd quickly answered. "I will send for the butler again and——"

"I insist on remaining, Gordon, to lend you a hand," Doctor Barbette interrupted. "I will direct Jackson to call the butler. Have you any other instructions to give him?"

Both men had turned away while speaking, and Nick Carter had edged nearer the coroner. Clasping his arm, he drew him still closer and hurriedly whispered:

"I want you to go with me when I leave. In the meantime, find out what undertaker is to be employed. Say that you have directions to give him and will send

him to the house. Do this without betraying any misgivings."

Doctor Paulding regarded him with intense surprise for a moment, but there could be no mistaking the expression in the detective's eyes.

"I understand," he muttered, replying. "I will do so."

Nick quickly drew away, noting that he had not been observed, and he presently joined Thornton and said:

"If I can be of no further assistance, Frank, I will go on to the Oakwood with my companions. We shall remain in Alton a day or two."

"Very good," said Thornton, extending his hand. "I will see you to-morrow, then, instead of this evening."

"Do so, Frank, by all means."

"Surely. I have much to say to you."

Gordon Boyd overheard them and hastened to express his gratitude for the services rendered.

"You must call at my home before leaving, Mr. Carter," he earnestly added. "Laura would never forgive me if I were to let you depart without having given her an opportunity to thank you. Promise to call on us before leaving town."

"Very well," said Nick. "I will do so, Mr. Boyd, if nothing unexpected prevents me. If you are going my way, Doctor Paulding, there is room for you in my car."

"Thank you," said the physician. "I will ride with you as far as the Oakwood. By the way, Mr. Boyd, what undertaker will you employ? I will notify him for you, if you wish, as I must give him a few simple directions. I shall view the body again to-morrow."

"We shall employ Mr. Spencer," Boyd replied. "I know that he would have been my uncle's choice. I will leave you to notify him, then, as you suggest."

"I will do so on my way home."

"Thank you."

Doctor Paulding lingered only to shake hands with the speaker, then hastened to overtake the three detectives, who were on their way to the touring car.

Glancing back while they picked their way through the narrow lane, Nick took a last look in the direction of the links.

Dusk had nearly turned to darkness. Stars were beginning to gleam and glitter in the violet sky. All that then could be discerned by the detective was a vague group of men, burdened with another, moving slowly homeward across the level sweep of the putting green.

CHAPTER IV.

NICK CARTER'S SUBTERFUGE.

Nick Carter had not volunteered an explanation of his conduct, but Doctor Paulding no sooner was seated in the touring car than he abruptly demanded, sharply regarding the detective:

"Now, Mr. Carter, what's the meaning of this? I have done what you directed, but feel far from sure that I did right."

"Take my word for it, then," said Nick, smiling.

"But you must have had some reason for it?"

"Very true."

"Kindly enlighten me, then?"

"Briefly stated, Doctor Paulding, I have serious misgivings as to the cause of Mr. Hopedale's death."

"How can that be? You said——"

"Oh, I admit that I agreed with you and with the opinion expressed by Doctor Barbette," Nick interrupted. "In view of my uncertainty, however, and the fact that I shall require a little time in which to verify, or dispel my suspicions, I could not wisely say what I really thought. An explanation would have been demanded. I would have had to state my reasons and expose my hand, which might have been too disastrous."

"Disastrous?" Doctor Paulding echoed. "That implies a good deal, Mr. Carter."

"No more than I intend," said Nick. "When the liberty of a dangerous crook is involved, the perversion of justice is always disastrous."

"But what on earth do you suspect?"

"I suspect that Mr. Abner Hopedale was murdered."

"Murdered!" gasped the physician. "In that case, Mr. Carter, I must——"

"Continue to be guided by me," Nick slipped in quickly. "Take my word for it, Doctor Paulding, you will make no mistake in doing so. I may be entirely wrong, you know, and Mr. Hopedale may have died a natural death. When suspicions exist, however, it is not always wise to immediately reveal them."

"But you surely could have trusted his nephew, Gordon Boyd, also Doctor Barbette, and——"

"Under such circumstances, Doctor Paulding, I trust no one who might even remotely invite suspicion," Nick interposed. "You do not come under that head. As district coroner, moreover, you can be of peculiar assistance to me in ferreting out the truth. I want you to aid me."

"Why, I certainly will do so, Mr. Carter, of course," Doctor Paulding said gravely. "But what reasons have you for suspecting any person of this crime?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Not tell me?"

"Not before I find tangible evidence and positive proof," Nick said firmly. "You know that I would not take this position without feeling morally that I am right. You know, too, that suspicions alone are not enough. I cannot say how long I shall require, possibly only the few days before the funeral. I will make you a full and definite statement before the burial, at the latest, that you may then take such steps as the case requires."

"But an autopsy——"

"Must be deferred for a few days," Nick insisted. "That is why I pretended to agree with you and advised you as to the disposal of the body. I want no one to think that murder is even suspected. Three days, at least, will probably intervene before the funeral. I think I can in that time get in my work."

"Really, Mr. Carter, this is——"

"The exact situation, Doctor Paulding, told in a nutshell," Nick again interposed. "It is all that can be told, at present, and it's up to you to follow my instructions. You will not, I repeat, make any mistake in doing so."

Doctor Paulding considered the matter a moment without replying, then said abruptly:

"Very well, Mr. Carter, I cannot doubt the judgment of a man of your reputation. For a few days, at least, I will be governed by your directions."

"You must confide in no one, mind you."

"Trust me. I will maintain absolute secrecy."

"Very good."

"What's to be done?"

"Very little as far as you are concerned," Nick replied. "You must view the body again to-morrow morning. State again that death undoubtedly was due to heart disease and that no autopsy will be necessary. That will apparently end your official interest in the case."

"Certainly."

"It then will be inferred that no further investigations are to be made, and that murder has not even been suspected," Nick added. "That will enable me to get in my work without alarming the culprits. I shall make my first move this evening."

"How so?"

"Are you acquainted with Spencer, the undertaker?"

"Yes, very well acquainted."

"Can he be trusted?"

"Yes, surely, under the circumstances."

"Very good. Where is his place of business?"

"Only a few doors east of the Oakwood."

"Capital!" said Nick. "I will stop in the hotel for a change of garments and a disguise. You go to Spencer's place in the meantime and confide the circumstances to him. I will rejoin you there within twenty minutes."

"But what are your intentions?"

"I am going as his assistant to the Hopedale residence. I want another look at the body. I wish to be present when it is embalmed and prepared for burial."

"Ah, I see," said Doctor Paulding. "But what do you expect to find?"

"I have no definite expectations," Nick replied. "Whatever I find will be reported to you at the proper time. Do only what I direct, Doctor Paulding, and leave all the rest to me. Yonder is the Oakwood, I infer?" he added, as they came in sight of a large, brilliantly lighted hotel somewhat back from the broad avenue they had been following.

"Yes. The driveway entrance is in the side street."

"Slip around there, Danny, and drop Doctor Paulding on the corner," Nick directed. "By the way, did I understand Doctor Barbette to say he is living in the Oakwood?"

"He is, Nick, yes."

"A married man?"

"No."

"How long has he been here?"

"About a month. His home is in Paris, where Gordon Boyd and Miss Hopedale met him when abroad a year ago. They are very friendly, and he is a frequent visitor at the Hopedale mansion. If what I hear is true, he is likely to take a bride to Paris when he returns."

"Laura Hopedale?" questioned Nick.

"I guess, if she will consent, there would be no doubt of it," said the physician. "I will expect you at Spencer's place in twenty minutes. It is half a block from here in that direction."

"I will be with you in less time," Nick replied, as the physician stepped from the touring car and hurried away.

None noticed a woman, who, at that moment, was crossing the street, and who passed directly back of the touring car. She was a striking person, nevertheless, with a tall, superbly graceful figure, as appeared in the perfect lines of her tailor-made costume. Through the meshes of a gray veil that partly hid her face, she glanced swiftly at the departing physician and the occupants of the car, then turned quickly and vanished around the corner toward the front entrance of the hotel.

Five minutes later, unobserved in a corridor leading from the large and handsomely furnished main office of the house, she saw Nick enter with Chick and Patsy, and she lingered to watch them until they had registered and entered one of the elevators.

Then, lifting her veil, she crossed the office and entered a telephone booth, glancing back over her shoulder and tightly closing the door.

Men gazed furtively at her, admiring her superb figure, her queenly grace, her darkly handsome face. It was that of a woman of thirty, with rounded, regular features, the richly velvet complexion of a creole, and eyes that seemed to swim in somber pools of liquid light, half veiled under her drooping black lashes. She was the type of woman that turns men's heads and racks with jealousy the hearts of women.

She unhooked the telephone receiver and called up—the Hopedale residence.

In the meantime, conducted by a hallboy in blue and brass, Nick Carter entered the suite assigned him, followed by Chick and Patsy. He threw off his coat and hat and strode into the bathroom, from which he called, a bit brusquely, the moment the departing servant had closed the hall door:

"Open my suit case, Patsy. Pull out my make-up box and the blue serge suit. I must be out of here in ten minutes."

"I'll have you ready, chief," Patsy dryly predicted.

"Ten minutes, eh?" said Chick, when Nick reappeared and set about changing his garments. "That will suffice for a partial explanation, at least. What, as Doctor Paulding said, is the meaning of this? What thread have you picked up? Do you really believe that Abner Hopedale was murdered? Do you still think that Hobart Goff is in these parts?"

"I now am convinced of the last," Nick replied.

"But Thornton's statement that there is no truth in that newspaper item knocks our theory on the head," Chick objected. "That was our only incentive to seeking Goff in these parts."

"Thornton may be mistaken."

"Do you think that he is?"

"I do."

"Why so? For what reason?"

"Because this fatality, Chick, follows so close upon Hopedale's previous narrow escape from death," said Nick. "It came much too quickly to be attributed to a coincidence. Some person, or persons, have been deliberately planning to kill this man and to so accomplish it that the crime would not be suspected. That very nearly succeeded. If we had not turned up in the nick of time, Doctor Paulding surely would, as you saw, have ascribed the death to heart disease. It's a hundred to one that that would have ended the case."

"I agree with you on that point," said Chick. "But who are the crooks? Why Hobart Goff? If what Thornton says is true——"

"Stop a moment," Nick interrupted. "Have you forgotten the deadly parallel, the likeness of the method employed in killing Doctor David Deacon to that in the first attempt upon the life of Abner Hopedale? That

still inheres, still points to Hobart Goff, and the exceeding craft with which this murder finally has been committed also smacks of his perverted genius and knavish originality."

"Evidently, then, you have discovered something of special significance."

"I have, indeed."

"Where and what?"

"A tiny scratch, Chick, on the breast of Abner Hopedale, and nearly in a line with his heart."

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Patsy, with ears pricked up. "That ought to cut some ice. What could you make of it, chief?"

"I did not have time to determine how and with what it was caused," Nick replied. "I could not have done so without being seen by Gordon Boyd, the two physicians, the butler, and chauffeur. I deferred a thorough inspection, therefore, until I could make it without being detected."

"Ah, I see! That's why you are going with Spencer, when he lays out the body?"

"Exactly."

"But do you suspect any of the persons mentioned?"

"Not definitely," said Nick. "We must work under the surface, therefore, until we get a positive line on some one. We then may find that some one to be in league with Hobart Goff."

"I now see at what you are driving," said Chick.

"Obviously, if I am right, more than one person has been plotting against Hopedale's life," Nick added. "We must find out who will chiefly benefit by his death. There is no telling who may be guilty. That is why I would not confide in Gordon Boyd, nor in any person related to, or living in the home of Abner Hopedale. That must be deferred until we can find a positive clew to the identity of his assassin."

"That's a proper precaution, chief, for fair," commented Patsy.

"But you must have deduced something from the scratch on his breast, Nick, or you would not have shaped this course so quickly," said Chick. "Even before Doctor Paulding arrived, you declared it to be a case of murder. Haven't you overlooked one possibility?"

"What one, Chick?"

"That the scratch may be an old one, and caused in some simple way?"

"Not so," Nick declared. "The scratch was very recently inflicted. A tiny particle of skin was still hanging from it. I thought at first that one of his fingers had slipped through the openings of his two shirts and slightly dug the skin and flesh, when he gripped his breast in the sudden agony of his fatal attack."

"That may be correct, after all."

"In that case, Chick, there should have been evidence of it on the edge or under the nail of one of his fingers. I examined all of them with my lens."

"Nothing doing?"

"Absolutely nothing."

"By Jove, that may be right, then!"

"I am going to clinch it, Chick, by a more careful inspection of the scratch," said Nick. "No one in the house will suspect me. Only Spencer, the undertaker, will be wise to it, and I'll make sure of his secrecy. I may have something to add to this when I return."

"Quite likely."

"In the meantime," Nick hurriedly added, then nearly ready to depart, "see what you can quietly learn about Gordon Boyd and Doctor Barbette. Find out how the former stands in the community and what his relations have been with the French physician."

"Do you suspect Doctor Barbette?"

"Somewhat."

"Why so?"

"I will explain when I return. It will keep until then, all right, and time now is of value. Doctor Paulding is waiting, and Boyd may phone to Spencer if the undertaker fails to arrive promptly. I must be on the skirmish line, or a chance shot might ruin all."

"That's true," Chick allowed.

"Enough, then, for the present. I will return in a couple of hours."

It was half past eight when the undertaker's somber black wagon entered the long driveway approaching the Hopedale mansion. The spacious grounds appeared silent and deserted. The starlight could not penetrate the thick foliage of the overarching trees.

From under the side porte-cochère, however, through which the winding driveway made out to the stable and garage, the powerful lamps of a motionless limousine cast a blinding glare over part of the lawn, and denoted that visitors already had arrived at this house, on which the shadow of death had fallen—and, perhaps, the curse of crime.

The undertaker pulled up at the front door.

He was a very tall and narrow man. He had serious eyes and a full beard. He always wore a black frock coat and stovepipe hat, all of which accentuated his height and narrowness, giving him the look of a long black lead pencil.

Mr. Oliver Spencer was a fine fellow, nevertheless, and very much of a gentleman—so much of a gentleman, in fact, that he had seriously objected to the subterfuge required of him. He yielded only when the gravity of the occasion was forcibly impressed upon him, and when influenced, in no small degree, by the arguments of the famous detective.

The butler, responding to the bell, admitted them to a deep, richly furnished hall.

Frank Thornton and Doctor Barbette came from the library to receive them and to give them a few directions in behalf of Gordon Boyd and Laura.

Nick had told Spencer to do the talking. He did not see Laura Hopedale, nor Thornton's wife, Claudia. Nor did he see Gordon Boyd until, when conducted to a side room in which the body of the aged millionaire was lying, he caught sight of him through the partly open door of the library.

Gordon Boyd was talking earnestly with the visitor who had arrived in the limousine ten minutes before. She sat with her fine figure bowed toward him over the library table, with her hands placed upon one of his, with the glow from the shaded lamp falling full on her strong and strikingly handsome face—that of the woman who had telephoned from the Oakwood.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAN OUTSIDE.

Two hours passed.

Two persons stood alone at the bier on which the dead man was lying. A sheet shrouded the cold, inanimate form. The undertaker had ended his work to be done then and there. He stood gazing down at the shrouded figure for a last moment, when Nick drew nearer and broke the silence.

"All through?" he quietly asked.

Spencer bowed and murmured:

"Yes."

"I now may do what I require?"

"When you will."

"Presently," said Nick, with voice still lowered. "Do you know the woman that was with Gordon Boyd in the library?"

"Only by name."

"What is her name?"

"Mrs. Helen Vancourt."

"A resident in Alton?"

"No. She has been living in the Oakwood with a maid for several weeks. She is not known here, so far as I have heard, but Mr. Boyd probably can tell you all about her. They have been noticeably friendly."

"Her husband——"

"She is a widow."

"H'm, I see!" Nick muttered.

Then pointing to the shrouded figure, he asked:

"Have you observed anything unusual in his condition?"

"Only one thing," said Spencer gravely.

"What was that?"

"Rigor mortis is very pronounced."

"More so than——"

"Than I have ever seen in handling several hundred bodies."

Nick recalled three men who had been stabbed with a poisoned stiletto by Hobart Goff at the time of his escape. The same extraordinary rigidity had followed the swift death of each.

Nick's brows knit closer. He turned down the sheet and exposed the bare breast of the body. The slight scratch that he had come there to examine was hardly perceptible. He pointed to it and asked:

"Did you notice it?"

"Yes," replied Spencer.

"What do you think of it?"

"I cannot account for it. It appears to be only a slight scratch. It may have been caused by a pin in one of his garments."

Nick drew a powerful lens from his pocket and again examined the scratch. It was enlarged a hundredfold. He saw that a finger nail could not have caused it. He saw, too, a tiny spot near one end of it. It appeared like an enlarged pore in the skin.

Nick placed his thumb and finger on opposite sides of the spot and attempted to spread the flesh. It yielded easily. The spot increased perceptibly. It became, not a spot, not a pore, but a—puncture through the skin.

Under the pressure of the detective's fingers an atom of clotted blood exuded.

Spencer saw it, starting involuntarily, and gasped aloud:

"Good Lord! This man has been stabbed with a needle, a hatpin, or some very slender——"

The sharp snap of a breaking twig interrupted him.

The sound came through the closed blinds of an open window.

Nick heard it and turned like a flash. One bound took him to the window. He threw open the blinds and gazed out.

The bright light from within fell briefly upon a crouching figure, moving swiftly away, and upon a face turned backward as the fleeing man glanced over his shoulder.

It was a smoothly shaved, hard-featured face, under a black slouch hat. It looked distorted and ghastly in contrast with the black scarf knotted around the neck. Hatred glared from its scowling eyes. Its lips were viciously drawn. It wore the vengeful, malignant look of a fiend let loose from Hades.

There was no mistaking it, nevertheless, though seen by the detective only for a moment.

It was the face of—Hobart Goff.

Nick Carter did not speak. He placed one hand on the sill and leaped from the window. The drop was five feet to the lawn on the west side of the house. His feet slipped on the damp greensward and he fell nearly prostrate.

It was a fortunate fall.

A spit of fire flashed in the darkness, and the spiteful crack of a revolver rang on the night air. A bullet whizzed over the detective's head.

Nick leaped up and darted after the murderous rascal, drawing his own revolver while he ran.

Goff had fled around a rear corner of the house.

Nick turned the same corner within ten seconds—but the fleeing miscreant had vanished.

A path to the stable, the gloom under the spreading trees, clumps of shrubbery only dimly discernible, the rear door of the house, the windows of an unlighted kitchen—Nick took all these in with a glance, and these were all.

He listened for a moment, hearing nothing, then rushed on and around the opposite corner of the house.

The red rear light of the limousine met his gaze. A glow came through the hall door under the porte-cochère. The chauffeur was leaning out from his seat, evidently wondering what had occurred. Other figures emerged from the house—Thornton and Gordon Boyd, followed by Doctor Barbette.

Less than half a minute had passed since the shot was fired.

Nick thrust his revolver into his pocket and hastened toward the side door.

"What was that noise?" Thornton cried, observing him but not suspecting his identity.

"It sounded like a revolver," Doctor Barbette vouchsafed, gazing. "How came you out here, eh? I thought you were in the room with Mr. Spencer."

Nick explained as best served his purpose.

"I was with him," said he. "He had opened one of the windows for air. I heard some one outside and I threw open the blinds and saw a man running away. I leaped out and pursued him, but he fired a revolver at me and escaped in the darkness back of the house. That is all I can tell you."

"*Pardieu!*" cried Doctor Barbette, with a look of astonishment. "That is very strange, very extraordinary."

"Did you see the man's face?" Gordon Boyd demanded.

"Only for a moment, sir," replied the disgusted detective.

"Did you recognize him?"

"I did not. I had only a glance at him, but am sure I never saw him before," Nick earnestly asserted.

"Strange—very strange!" Doctor Barbette repeated. "Do you know any man, my dear Gordon, who would be up to such business?"

"No, no, certainly not. I am completely in the dark."

"Could you identify the man, eh?" Doctor Barbette turned again to the detective.

"I don't think so," said Nick. "I did not see him plainly enough for that."

"*Sacre!* it is most amazing. Who can explain it, eh?"

No one undertook to do so, and Doctor Barbette quickly added, as if suddenly hit with an idea:

"*Pardieu!* Why not call that famous detective? Nick Carter might solve the mystery. I have heard that no mystery is too deep for him to solve. Send for him, my dear Gordon, by all means, and——"

"I'll do nothing of the kind," Boyd interrupted, frowning. "Let the spying rascal go. Jackson shall watch outside until morning. Look at Laura. She is overcome with grief and nervous excitement. We have had enough of the sensational. We will have no more of it. We are at home to no one, Judkins, till I give you other orders."

The last was addressed to the butler, who had appeared at the open door.

Mrs. Vancourt had put on her outside garments and was about to depart.

Nick now saw Laura Hopedale in the main hall. She was pale and trembling, still sobbing with grief and distress, while Claudia Thornton tenderly strove to comfort her. Nick slipped away and hastened to rejoin the undertaker, lest Spencer might inadvertently betray him in the excitement, and he saw no more of the others till he and Spencer departed, and then only Judkins, the butler.

It was eleven o'clock when Nick returned to his suite in the Oakwood, where he found Chick and Patsy awaiting him.

"Well, chief, what's the verdict?" Patsy eagerly inquired.

"What I predicted," said Nick, removing his disguise and lighting a cigar. "Hobart Goff killed him."

"Are you sure of it?"

"Absolutely."

"Gee, that's going some!" declared Patsy. "Cut loose, chief, and tell us how you clinched it."

Nick complied and briefly told them all that had transpired. Chick listened without interrupting, but with a look of increasing perplexity.

"I'll be hanged if I can fathom it," he remarked, when Nick had concluded. "You were right in suspecting Goff, I'll admit, and appear to have fixed the murder upon him, but that alone is far from solving the mystery."

"That's right, too," chimed in Patsy.

"How could he have turned the trick?" Chick questioned. "Why did he do it? How is he related to these people? What has he to gain? Is he in the employ of some one who will benefit by the death of Hopedale?"

"Possibly," said Nick, knocking the ashes from his cigar.

"But why, in that case, was he spying outside of the house? What occasion for that? Can he have suspected your game? Did he know that you were masquerading as the undertaker's assistant?"

"That seems hardly probable," said Nick. "He was more than likely bent upon learning whether the undertaker would discover the wound he had inflicted."

"And be led to suspect foul play?"

"Exactly."

"You may be right. That may explain it."

"I now am convinced, Chick, that the wound was inflicted with a long and very slender needle, poisoned with some deadly ingredient, as was the stiletto with which Goff killed the three prison guards. It must be some infernal poison that he discovered while in the drug and patent-medicine business. In each of the three cases mentioned the weapon is known to have reached the victim's heart, upon which the poison evidently acts with instantly fatal effect."

"That, I remember, was the conclusion of the prison physicians."

"In this case, however, a much more slender weapon was used," Nick continued. "Goff's design is now obvious. He used a needle so fine that it left a hardly perceptible superficial wound, the flesh and skin closing after its withdrawal, confining the slight hemorrhage that would occur after the immediate death caused by the action of the poison. If a drop or two of blood exuded, the miscreant wiped it away, and also aided the closing of the wound by compressing the puncture."

"That could be easily done," said Chick.

"But the rascal met with one mishap."

"What was that?"

"That which caused the slight scratch near the wound."

"How was that done?"

"By the breaking of the needle when Goff tried to withdraw it," Nick explained. "Obviously, so long and slender a needle, impregnated with deadly poison, could not have been safely used without being adjusted in a handle of some kind."

"Surely not."

"When Goff tried to withdraw it, the needle broke near the handle," Nick went on. "Goff's hand slipped slightly, and the rough end of the bit of needle still protruding from the handle scratched the skin slightly at one side of the wound. I am very sure that is how it occurred, for I could see with my lens that the scratch was a double one, so to speak, plainly denoting that there were two ragged edges on the end of the steel, not a single sharp point. All this was, of course, perceptible only with a powerful lens."

"By Jove, you have done some fine figuring," said Chick. "I believe you are right."

"Sure he's right," put in Patsy. "My money goes on that."

"I really have no doubt of it," said Nick. "Furthermore, Goff must have succeeded in withdrawing the broken needle, for he would not have risked leaving it in the wound, where an autopsy would have been sure to reveal it."

"Certainly not, Nick."

"I doubt that he would have kept so deadly a weapon, however, after breaking it," Nick added. "It would have been soiled with blood and poison, and could not easily have been carried in one's pocket. He more likely would

have disposed of it. It would be a valuable bit of evidence, if we could find it. I shall undertake to do so to-morrow."

"But admitting all of these points, Nick, how the deuce can we account for the murder?" Chick again questioned perplexedly. "Who is to profit from it? Who is the person behind the gun? Goff would not have committed this crime unless some one employed him to do it. If the game——"

"Stop a moment, Chick," Nick interrupted. "As a matter of fact, I suspect that there is much more of a game being played than you imagine."

"Why so?"

"Tell me first what you have learned about Gordon Boyd and Doctor Barbette."

"Very little," said Chick. "Nothing, in fact, to their discredit."

"Let me be the judge. What have you learned?"

"Only that Doctor Barbette is a French physician, whom Gordon Boyd met when abroad a year ago. Boyd is very favorably regarded here, and is quite popular."

"Anything more?"

"Nothing material. The two men are very friendly, and both are quite intimate with a wealthy widow who is stopping here, one Mrs. Vancourt. Boyd is said to be hard hit with her beauty."

Nick smiled a bit oddly.

"Just so!" he quietly exclaimed. "I have seen Mrs. Vancourt this evening. She evidently called at the Hopedale residence to express her sympathy. Possibly, however, she had some other motive."

"You don't suspect her, also?" questioned Chick, surprised.

"Well, I may decide that she will stand watching," said Nick, with some grimness. "Spencer says that very little is known about her here. That's quite remarkable, in view of her beauty and the interest she arouses. She looks to me, Chick, like a very keen and clever woman. She may be something more than that, even."

"H'm, I see!" said Chick.

"Between her, Barbette, and Mr. Gordon Boyd, I think we may discover why the milk is in the coconut." Nick arose abruptly with the last. "Let's sleep on the problem and tackle it again in the morning."

CHAPTER VI.

THE DETECTIVE ART.

Ten o'clock the following morning found Nick Carter seated in the library of the Hopedale residence, while Chick and Patsy were following instructions given them while at breakfast, the nature of which will presently appear.

Nick had learned, upon arriving at the house, that Thornton and his wife were absent, with Gordon Boyd, on a mission pertaining to the funeral and burial of the deceased. Nick was not sorry on that account, however, for it opened the way for an interview with Laura Hopedale alone, which was what he chiefly desired at that time. He had waited only a few moments when the girl came down from her room and joined him.

"I am pleased to see you, Mr. Carter," she said seriously, after their greeting and a few conventional remarks. "I feel very grateful for your kindness yesterday."

Nick's mission was a delicate one, but he contrived to learn what he wanted to know without causing the girl painful misgivings. He needed only to look at her pale, pretty face to know that she was utterly above duplicity and evil of any nature.

"I promised your cousin, Mr. Boyd, that I would not leave town without calling to see you," he replied. "I am glad that I could be of service to you, yet regret the sad occasion."

"We suffer a terrible loss," bowed Laura gravely. "I have just begun to realize it. Do you leave town to-day?"

"Possibly," said Nick evasively.

"Mr. Thornton and Claudia will want to see you. They think so much of you, Mr. Carter; more than I could possibly tell."

"I appreciate their regard," said Nick. "I shall try to see them before I leave; also Doctor Barbette. His home is in France, I believe."

"Yes, in Paris," said Laura.

"You met him there when abroad a year ago, I understand."

"No, not I, Mr. Carter."

"Ah! I was misinformed, then."

"That is to say," Laura explained, "I did not see him when I was in Paris. But Gordon made his acquaintance there."

"While you were abroad with him?"

"Yes."

"I wonder that you, too, did not happen to meet him at that time," said Nick suavely. "But you heard Mr. Boyd speak of Doctor Barbette, no doubt, while you were in Paris?"

"Well, no; I cannot say that I did," replied Laura thoughtfully. "I don't remember that he was mentioned at that time. When Doctor Barbette came to the Oakwood, however, Gordon told me of having been friendly with him in Paris."

"Ah, I see!" said Nick carelessly, though he really saw much more than the girl suspected. "Doctor Barbette is a very polished and pleasing gentleman. I suppose your uncle, Mr. Hopedale, was acquainted with him."

"Oh, yes; Doctor Barbette has frequently been here. My uncle was rather fond of him."

"His death is a great loss to the community, also," Nick soberly observed. "People I have met speak very highly of him."

"He deserves all the good that can be said of him, Mr. Carter," replied Laura, checking a sob.

"No doubt," said Nick. "He has, I understand, done much for the town. The fact that he has left no will, however——"

"Oh, he has!" interrupted Miss Hopedale innocently.

"Dear me, is that so?"

"He made a will only a few weeks ago. It is in the hands of his lawyer, Judge Arbuckle."

"I was misinformed again, then," said Nick, pretending to be a bit doubtful.

"Oh, but I am sure of it, Mr. Carter," Laura quickly insisted, observing his somewhat incredulous expression. "Uncle told Gordon and me all about it at the time. We are his only heirs, aside from numerous charitable bequests. The residue of the estate is to be divided equally between Gordon and me. Uncle preferred that we should

know all about it at the time. Gordon will tell you I am right."

Nick quickly turned the subject. He had learned what he wanted to know.

"I see there is a shorter way to the Oakwood, Miss Hopedale, by passing back of the stable and orchard and crossing the golf links," Nick remarked, glancing from the window when he arose to go.

"Yes, considerably shorter," Laura replied. "It takes you by the golf house and to the lane running out to the country road, which enters the woodland at that point. It is where I saw you last evening."

"There is no objection, I suppose, to my going that way."

"No, indeed; surely not. I will let you out the side door."

"Did your uncle frequently go out there to watch the golf players?" Nick carelessly inquired.

"No, not often," said Laura unsuspiciously. "It was too long a walk for him to wisely take. I think that of yesterday overtaxed his heart and brought on the fatal attack. I now wish, oh, so much, that he had not gone out there."

"What led him to do so?"

"A friend of ours, Mrs. Vancourt, who had been lunching with us, was returning to the Oakwood that way. She persuaded him to accompany her as far as the golf house. She is entirely blameless, of course, for she could not anticipate the fatality. Nor could any of us."

"No, surely not," Nick allowed.

He spoke with grave kindliness, gently pressing the girl's extended hand, then bowed himself down the steps and departed in the direction of the stable and garage.

"I guess I did not err in directing Chick to make a special mark of Mrs. Vancourt," he soliloquized, with ominous mien. "Not anticipate the fatality, eh? On the contrary, Miss Hopedale, I would wager that she deliberately paved the way for it. Poor girl! It seems rough, indeed, to crush her with additional woe. But there is no alternative—no sane alternative."

Nick sauntered back of the orchard and across the links. They then were bathed with the warm morning sunlight. They and the woodland flanking them on two sides appeared to be entirely deserted. Only the singing of birds broke at intervals the rural quietude.

Nick glanced around more sharply when he approached the golf house. He saw that both doors had been left open in the excitement of the previous evening; also, that the house was then unoccupied.

Nick did not enter it, but walked on as far as the well near which the body had been found. He glanced around again, but saw no one. Two figures crouching back of some thick shrubbery skirting the near woods were entirely concealed from his view.

Pausing at the well, Nick examined the woodwork surrounding it and gazed down into its cool depths. The azure sky was reflected from the still water, twenty feet below.

"I'll seek it here, for a starter," he muttered. "It would have been the most convenient and seemingly safest place."

Nick drew a small parcel from his pocket, removing the wrapper, and brought to light a powerful magnet, wound with a coil of copper wire. He had borrowed it that morning from a local electrician.

Attached to the magnet was a long string, which Nick unwound. Then he leaned over the woodwork and began to lower the magnet into the well.

Foot by foot it fell, swinging slightly to and fro, a fateful pendulum, till it struck the surface of the water and disappeared.

Nick dropped it lower and lower, till he felt the magnet touch bottom. He then drew it up a little, extending his hand across the well and moving it from side to side. The magnet on the end of the string followed the moving hand.

Nick then drew it above the surface of the water—and saw something clinging to it.

He drew both from the well and found on the metal ends of the magnet—a steel needle, six inches long, smaller than a knitting needle, and soiled with blood and stains of some dark substance.

There was a look of grim satisfaction on the face of the famous detective. Still leaving the needle on the magnet, Nick turned from the well and entered the golf house. There, gingerly removing the broken needle, he inclosed it in a glass tube brought for the purpose, and placed it with the magnet in his coat pocket.

Then, suddenly, his frowning countenance changed like a flash.

Some one was coming through the lane and approaching the open back door of the golf house. One of the figures crouching back of the shrubbery had stolen away through the woods and entered the lane. He was whistling a popular air.

Nick heard, but did not then see him. He took a chair and sat down near a small bare table in the middle of the room—just as the approaching man appeared at the open door.

Doctor Barbette.

CHAPTER VII.

THE THIRD MAN.

Nick Carter looked up quickly.

Doctor Barbette stopped short on the threshold.

Both appeared to be surprised.

"Why, hello, doctor!" Nick quietly exclaimed, smiling. "You give me an agreeable surprise. I heard some one whistling, but I did not think of you."

Doctor Barbette laughed lightly and entered, bowing and rubbing his hands. There was a gleam of sinister amusement in his keen eyes.

"I am going over to see Gordon and Laura," he explained. "I frequently come this way. It makes what you call a short cut from the Oakwood."

"I see," said Nick.

"*Pardieu!* You give me a surprise, also. I would not have thought of finding you here."

He drew up a chair and sat down directly opposite the detective. Only the small, bare table divided them. Superficially viewed, there then was nothing sinister in the situation.

Nick spoke a bit more gravely, nevertheless, when he replied.

"No doubt you are equally surprised, doctor, at finding me here," said he. "I am rather glad of this meeting, however, for I have something to confide to you."

"To me, eh?" Doctor Barbette's brows rose inquiringly. "Really, my dear Carter, I shall be charmed. Confide to me, eh? I am honored. What is it about?"

"The death of Abner Hopedale," said Nick. "I came here again this morning to look over the ground."

"The ground, eh?"

"Yes. The scene of the crime."

"Crime!" echoed Doctor Barbette, gazing. "You use a strange word, my dear Carter. That word—crime."

"It is the proper word, Doctor Barbette," said Nick. "I use it because Mr. Abner Hopedale did not die a natural death. He was murdered."

"Murdered?" Barbette threw up his hands amazedly. "*Pardieu!* I think my ears deceive me. Murder—that is incredible! Impossible!"

"It is true."

"Do you still say so? You amaze me, my dear Carter. Are you sure of this?"

"Absolutely sure."

"Murdered by whom?"

"By a man named Hobart Goff."

"Hobart Goff—*pardieu!* I do not know the name," said Doctor Barbette, gazing steadily at the detective. "What of him? Who is Hobart Goff? How do you know all this? Why are you sure of it?"

"I have reconstructed the crime."

"That is not plain to me," said Doctor Barbette, shaking his head. "Reconstructed it, eh? What do you mean?"

"I have discovered the motive, beyond any reasonable doubt, and the way the crime was committed," said Nick. "Listen, Doctor Barbette, and I will tell you."

"I am all ears, my dear Carter. Proceed."

Doctor Barbette drew forward and placed his arms on the table, still gazing fixedly at Nick's inscrutable face.

"As you know, Doctor Barbette Mr. Hopedale was a very wealthy man," he began. "Wealth has always been an incentive to crime. In this case, in order to obtain it, an indirect method was adopted."

"An indirect method?"

"Exactly. A very beautiful woman, but doubly bold and unscrupulous, has succeeded in captivating one of the heirs of the Hopedale millions. She has, in fact, fairly turned his head with her ravishing beauty.

"She has agreed to marry him, but only on one condition—that he first may come into possession of his half of the vast property by hastening the death of Abner Hopedale. That has been done, Doctor Barbette, and that was the motive for the crime. I feel reasonably sure of it."

Doctor Barbette straightened up again. His eyes had a sharper glint. His voice, when he replied, sounded a bit cold and hard.

"I suppose, of course, that you refer to Gordon Boyd?" said he.

"I do."

"And the woman?"

"One said to be a widow, now living with a maid in the Oakwood, under the name of Mrs. Helen Vancourt," said Nick.

"And Hobart Goff?" questioned Doctor Barbette. "What of him? Where is he?"

"I am somewhat in the dark concerning him," Nick replied, with no change of countenance. "I cannot lay my hands on him—yet."

"But you expect to do so?"

"Surely."

"When?"

"Sooner or later. I cannot say definitely."

Doctor Barbette shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"Really, my dear Carter, all this seems incredible, utterly incredible," he repeated. "How can it be? How could the woman know that Gordon Boyd is to inherit half of his uncle's millions?"

"Gordon Boyd informed her."

"But how could he have known?"

"His uncle informed him."

"Have you inquired about that?"

"I have."

"You are like quicksilver, my dear Carter. You move swiftly," said Doctor Barbette, with eyes beginning to narrow. "But I still am in doubt, deeply in doubt. How could this murder, if you are right, have been so craftily committed? There is no evidence of it, none whatever."

"On the contrary, Doctor Barbette, there is ample and convincing evidence of it," said Nick.

"*Pardieu!* You surprise me again. What evidence? It seems impossible. Such a time—such a place—such a crime! How could it have been done?"

"It was very carefully planned, very cleverly executed," Nick replied. "Mrs. Vancourt paved the way for it. She lunched with the Hopedales yesterday. Later she persuaded Mr. Hopedale to walk out with her to this house, to watch Gordon Boyd and Frank Thornton playing their game. It took them beyond the hill to the north, from the hollow, back of which this part of the links cannot be seen."

"You appear to have covered the entire ground," Doctor Barbette remarked, with somewhat sinister intonation.

"I have covered it," Nick replied. "Mrs. Vancourt had left Hopedale alone here when two players arrived back of the hill. They parted a little later, Gordon Boyd going to the house to dress for dinner.

"Though not yet sure of it, I think it highly probable that Mrs. Vancourt contrived to intercept Thornton and artfully prevent him from immediately returning here to get his watch, which he had removed before starting the game. His coming too quickly would have made it very inconvenient for Hobart Goff, and would probably have prevented this crime."

"Hobart Goff again, eh?" said Doctor Barbette. "Do you mean that he was here?"

"Certainly," said Nick. "Was it not here, Doctor Barbette, that the crime was committed?"

"*Pardieu!* It was here, I allow, that the fatality occurred. I do not like the word crime, which you persist in using. I am not sure, my dear Carter, that you are right."

"No?"

"Far from it."

"Let's go a step farther, then," said Nick. "Hobart Goff was at that time concealed in the woods and shrubbery about a rod beyond the well. Mr. Hopedale was seated alone on the piazza of this house. He evidently was well acquainted with Goff, despite that you, Doctor Barbette, never have heard of him."

"Why do you say evidently well acquainted, eh?" questioned Doctor Barbette. "How do you know that?"

"Because, since rules work both ways, there is no evidence that Hopedale's body was carried or dragged out to the well after the murder," said Nick. "Obviously, then, he must have been enticed out there before the deed was done. Since Hobart Goff did the deed, he must have been the one who enticed Hopedale out there, which, in turn, evinces the latter's acquaintance with him."

Doctor Barbette nodded. The point of his neatly trimmed beard was twitching perceptibly. Plainly enough, he saw that there was no denying the detective's statements.

"You reason shrewdly, my dear Carter," he replied. "You are a skillful logician. What more, eh?"

"I am led to infer that Hopedale enjoyed friendly relations with Goff," Nick continued. "Be that as it may, Goff not only was able to entice him out to the well, but also to get him in a position enabling him to kill him. He accomplished it, Doctor Barbette, by plunging a poisoned needle into Hopedale's heart."

"Horrible!" said Doctor Barbette. "Are you sure of it?"

"I have the needle in my pocket," said Nick. "Would you care to see it?"

"No, no, not for the world!" said Barbette, shuddering. "I will take your word for it."

"You may safely do so."

"But this man Goff—what of him, eh? Can he not be traced? Is there no clew to his whereabouts?"

"Only one clew—a very significant one," said Nick.

"Ah, indeed! What is that?"

Doctor Barbette lurched nearer the table. His color had waned, leaving him quite pale, but his squinted eyes were glittering feverishly.

"The clew is a dry bur," replied Nick placidly.

"A dry bur? That is all, eh?"

"That is enough."

"You mean, eh?"

"I saw it clinging to his trousers," said Nick, "I since have found that there is only one spot in this locality where a few prickly plants bear burs. That spot is on the edge of the woods, just beyond the well. Obviously, Doctor Barbette, that is the point from which Hobart Goff emerged just before killing Abner Hopedale."

"And the trousers on which you saw the bur, my dear Carter——"

"Were yours, Doctor Barbette," Nick cut in with sudden sharpness. "You are the man. You are Hobart Goff."

Nick's hands shot out and upward while he spoke. His fingers gripped like a flash the pointed beard of his hearer. A quick yank tore it away, not only the beard, but also the mustache, a perfectly fitted wig, and the gold-bowed spectacles, instantly revealing the smoothly shaved face, then ghastly white and distorted with vengeful hatred, that had glared back at him from under the window of the Hopedale house the previous night—the malignant face of the archcriminal and escaped convict, Hobart Goff.

Nick Carter had hardly a longer look at it, however, than he had the night before.

Another figure had appeared upon the scene, that of a stocky, stubby-bearded ruffian, who, with shoes removed, had crept, unheard, to the open door behind the detective, listening briefly and then leaping into the room.

Another bound brought him back of Nick's chair.

Goff saw him first and uttered a yell.

"Get him, Dorkins! Down him!"

There was no need for these commands. An uplifted weapon in the hand of the ruffian fell before they were uttered—fell even while Nick jerked the disguise from the face of the knave he had cornered.

It fell squarely on the top of the detective's head, a blow dealt as if to fell an ox, and Nick rolled from his chair without so much as a groan, a crimped, senseless heap, on the golf-house floor.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW PATSY CAUGHT ON.

It was eleven o'clock when Nick Carter went down and out in the golf house at the hands of Dorkins, so called, and into an oblivion from which he did not emerge for several hours.

At two o'clock that afternoon Chick Carter and Patsy arose from lunch in the main dining room of the fashionable Oakwood, both with looks of increasing uneasiness in their eyes, and sauntered out through the hotel office.

"Gee, there's nothing to it, Chick; nothing to it!" Patsy was saying impatiently. "He ought to have returned three hours ago, as he said, barring a slip-up. It would not have taken him an hour to do all he set out to do. You know that."

"There is no denying it, Patsy, I admit," Chick nodded.

"He's got in wrong in some way, or he'd have been here to lunch. Something has happened to him. He has slipped a cog, Chick, as sure as you're a foot high. Besides, where is that frog-eating Frenchman, or the marker for one? If the chief is right in suspecting that he is——"

"There is little doubt of that," Chick interposed. "Nick has him sized up right, I'm sure, and is waiting only to clinch every point before arresting the rascal. He also wants to find out, if possible, just where Gordon Boyd stands, just how deep he is in this game, and whether he can be pulled out of it with a whole skin for the sake of his pretty cousin. That's why he has set me to watching Mrs. Vancourt. It may be that the crime can be fixed entirely upon her, and——"

"But she is making no move of any kind," Patsy cut in impatiently. "She has been reading on the side veranda since ten o'clock, as if she hasn't a care on her mind. I can't stand for this stagnation. I feel like a bump on a log. Unless something comes off, by thunder, I'm going on a still hunt for the chief and find out why he——"

Chick checked him.

"Easy!" said he. "There's the woman, now."

They had approached a window commanding a view of the broad front veranda of the hotel. It was then occupied by numerous guests of the house, who had sauntered out there since lunch, and Chick had discovered Mrs. Vancourt among them.

She was apart from the others, however, near an end rise of steps accessible from the side street, toward which she was intently looking.

"I see her," Patsy muttered, replying. "What in thunder is she staring at?"

"Give it up," said Chick sententiously. "She evidently sees something that may—ah, I'm on! She's waiting for that fellow. By Jove, the game may break cover here and now."

"It does look like something doing, for fair," Patsy allowed, with countenance lighting.

A roughly clad man had mounted the steps while Chick was speaking. Though Mrs. Vancourt did not appear to recognize him, he at once approached and tendered her a letter, which she opened and read.

Intently watching her, Chick saw the color die out of her cheeks, saw that her somber black eyes took on a sharper gleam and glitter.

Suddenly crushing the letter between her hands, she began to question the man.

"I'm right, Patsy," Chick said quietly. "Something has come off, something that seriously disturbs her. That fellow has brought her bad news."

"It must have come, then, from Gordon Boyd or the fake sawbones," Patsy quickly reasoned. "Hadn't I better get after him, Chick, when he leaves?"

"That's precisely what you must do," Chick replied. "Put on a disguise and slip out through the end door of the house. You can pick him up in the side street."

"I'm on," Patsy muttered. "It's the bally messenger for mine."

He glided quickly away with the last, presently emerging from the house, so altered in appearance that his own mother would not have recognized him. He had time, moreover, to cross the street and easily picked up the departing man without attracting attention.

Patsy shadowed him to a drug store a block from the hotel, where his quarry entered a pay-station telephone booth and closed the door.

"Gee! that means business, as sure as death and taxes," thought Patsy, gazing through the window. "Who the deuce can he be, and who is he phoning to? I might find out, by gracious, if that back room is vacant."

Quick to note every possibility, Patsy saw that the telephone booth stood close against a partition of thin sheathing that inclosed a back room. Through a door back of the store counter, he could see the sunlight on the floor of the rear room, evidently entering through an open door in the side of the building.

Patsy darted around the corner in that direction and cautiously approached the open door. It was open, as he had inferred, and the back room was deserted. It was only a small rear part of the store, set off for compounding prescriptions.

Patsy stole in and clapped his ear close against the sheathing mentioned. As he had hoped, he could then faintly hear the voice of the man in the telephone booth. He heard only the following, broken at intervals when the speaker paused to listen:

"This is Dorkins talking—Dorkins! Do you get me?"

"I'm getting you, all right," thought Patsy dryly.

"Yes, mighty important," Dorkins went on, evidently replying to a question. "The king pin wants you at my place at three o'clock. . . . No matter what! . . . He'll put you wise when you get there. . . . Cut that out. You've got to come. He'll stand for nothing else. . . . Bad is right, mighty bad. But he will clip their wings. We've got the captain dead to rights, and the siren soon will land his first mate The cabin boy can be canned later."

"By Jove, there's no mistaking what all that means," thought Patsy, during another brief pause. "Nick has been nailed. That woman is out to get Chick, and I'm to be canned later. Gee! that gives me a giggly feeling. I'll queer that canning game, all right, or chuck my metal badge."

Dorkins spoke again.

"She'll show up with him, you can bet on that. Don't you fail to come, too, or—— . . . Oh, there's nothing in that. You've got to come. It's a case of come, or—well, you know! . . . Yes, I'll be there as soon as you. . . . All right. So long."

Dorkins hung up the telephone receiver and left the drug store.

Patsy continued to shadow him. It did not strain his mental faculties much to rightly interpret what he had heard, nor to determine what should be done.

He scribbled a few lines on a leaf of his notebook, while still trailing Dorkins, and presently stopped a young man whom he met.

"I want you to aid me," he explained, displaying his detective badge. "I'm one of Nick Carter's assistants. We are in Alton on an important case. I want this note delivered to Chick Carter, at the Oakwood. Will you take it to him?"

"To aid Nick Carter—you bet!" was the quick reply.

"Good on your head," said Patsy. "But it must be given to him stealthily, mind you."

"I'm on."

"Get the clerk to point Chick out to you," Patsy directed. "Then slip the note to Chick, without being observed. You need not say a word to him, for he'll be wise the moment he feels the paper in his hand."

"I've got you," replied the other. "Leave it to me."

"Go ahead, then. "Believe me, you are doing us a big favor."

"I'm mighty glad to do it. He'll have the note inside of five minutes."

"Bully for you!"

The young man hastened away.

Patsy had not lost sight of Dorkins, in the meantime, and he presently trailed him to a saloon and restaurant in a side street, where the lowering ruffian bought a drink, seated himself at a table, and ordered some lunch.

"Gee, I'd have had time to see Chick myself," thought Patsy. "But my note will fill the bill. It will show him the way, all right."

Chick Carter was somewhat puzzled about that time.

Seating himself on the hotel veranda to furtively watch Mrs. Vancourt, after parting from Patsy, Chick soon had discovered that she was repeatedly looking at him. Pretending that he did not observe her, he soon decided that she had designs upon him of some kind, and that she was trying to determine how she best could accomplish her object.

This perplexing situation, for Chick could not then imagine what she had up her sleeve, ended quite abruptly when the woman arose and went up to her room. For almost immediately Chick felt a hand touch his, leaving a wad of paper in it, while a slender young man hastened by his chair.

As Patsy had predicted, however, Chick was wise on the instant. He opened the paper between his hands to preclude observation, and read:

"Nick has been nailed. Mrs. Vancourt is out to get you. Let her! Give her all the rope she wants. I'll be on hand to queer her game and insure a general round-up. This goes! You know *me!* PATSY."

Chick laughed inwardly, then tore the scrap of paper to small pieces, which he presently threw over the rail of the veranda.

"By Jove, he must have discovered something very quickly," he said to himself. "He must be right, too, as appears in the conduct of the woman. Out to get me, eh? All I need do, then, is to sit still and wait."

Chick was right. He had waited only five minutes, moreover, when Mrs. Vancourt reappeared on the veranda, clad in her street garments. Furtively watching her, he saw her study him intently for a few moments, and then she approached and took a chair near his own.

"Pardon me, sir," she said, leaning toward him. "Am I right in supposing that you are Mr. Carter, the detective?"

Chick started slightly, as if surprised, then smiled and lifted his hat.

"Yes, madame, my name is Carter," he replied pleasantly. "I am not Nick Carter, however, if you refer to him."

"But you are a detective, aren't you?"

"Yes, that is my vocation. I am Nick's Carter's chief assistant."

"Are you busy just now—very busy?"

"Well, not at just this time, madame," said Chick, pretending to be both perplexed and interested. "Is there anything wrong, or anything I can do for you?"

"Yes, if you are willing. I will pay you very liberally for——"

"Pardon. Don't speak of pay before I know what you require," Chick interrupted, smiling again. "I may find it impossible to aid you."

"I trust that you will not, Mr. Carter," Mrs. Vancourt pleaded, with a look of appeal that would have melted most men. "I hardly know to whom I can turn. It will not take very much of your time."

"I may, in that case, be able to do so," said Chick. "What do you require?"

She drew her chair nearer to him and laid her fair, shapely hand on his arm.

"My name is Helen Vancourt," she said softly. "I am a widow and am in Alton on very important business, involving considerable property. I have an appointment with a man this afternoon of whom I am somewhat afraid. A meeting with him is imperative to my interests, however, and I fear to visit him alone. I want a witness to our interview, some man who will testify for me later, if necessary, and afford me protection at this time, in case of need. I wish that you would go with me to——"

"One moment," Chick again interposed. "Where are you to meet this man, Mrs. Vancourt?"

"At his home," she replied. "He refuses to come here to see me."

"Where is his home? Is it far from here?"

"Less than a mile, Mr. Carter. The entire business will not require much more than an hour."

"That being the case, Mrs. Vancourt, I suppose I can go with you," Chick now said thoughtfully. "Are you sure that I am the best person for you to employ?"

"Really, Mr. Carter, none would suit me better," she said feelingly. "I entreat you to consent."

"When do you wish to go?"

"At once."

"Very well. I will do so."

"Stay!" Mrs. Vancourt laid her hand on his. "Would you be willing to meet me at the side door in a few moments? I shall feel easier if we are not seen departing together. I will explain later."

"Very well," said Chick. "I will enter the house, Mrs. Vancourt, and will be at the side door in a couple of minutes."

"Ah, thank you, Mr. Carter!" she whispered, pressing his hand. "I will repay you. I will surely repay you."

"You surely will, indeed, but not as you mean," thought Chick, as he arose and entered the house.

CHAPTER IX.

PATSY TAKES A CHANCE.

Nick Carter, when he finally revived from the knock-out inflicted by Dorkins, found himself bound hand and foot and securely tied to a chair, his head and face dripping with cold water and his collar and cravat removed, denoting that steps had just been taken to revive him.

This was fully confirmed by a malignant laugh, by the first words that fell on his ears, and by the grinning face that met his gaze when he opened his eyes—that of Hobart Goff.

"I thought that would set you right," he said sneeringly, tossing aside a dripping sponge. "You are mighty lucky, or unlucky, that any treatment would prove effective. You've got an infernally hard head, a genuine bonehead, Carter, or you'd have been as stiff by this time as—well, as you soon will be!"

"Or the man you stabbed to death with a poisoned needle," said Nick, pulling himself together with an effort.

He had glanced sharply around while Goff was speaking. He knew that considerable time must have elapsed since he was knocked out. He saw that he had been removed from the golf house, but where he could not conjecture.

All that met his gaze, aside from the unmasked miscreant confronting him, were the dingy walls of an inferior kitchen, an open door leading into a back porch, a single window, the outer blinds of which were closed and the inner curtain drawn—these and the customary furnishings of such a room.

Nick judged from the sunlight through the porch door, however, that it was early afternoon. The shade trees on a small strip of ground outside told him that he was in some wooded section.

He gazed at Goff when he sternly replied, as above, but the murderous knave only laughed maliciously and retorted:

"Thanks to you, Carter, I again have the needle. You shall feel its sting."

"Possibly."

"Surely!" snapped Goff. "I will make dead sure of that. You have put me in a position leaving me no alternative. I will wipe you off the map, Carter; you and your two assistants."

"Possibly," Nick repeated.

"Wait and see. I already have taken steps to get them, or the more dangerous of the two. You may hear his steps at any moment. Watch out there, Hawley, and tell me when any one shows up."

An affirmative growl from outside told Nick that the gang comprised even more than he had suspected. He

now began to suspect, however, by what chance he had been discovered and watched by Goff and a confederate that morning, and by what trickery they had contrived to floor him, afterward removing him to his present quarters.

Nick met the threatening situation with no apparent concern, however, replying sternly to Goff's remark:

"You have only yourself to blame for the position you are in. You will play lucky, indeed, if it proves to be no worse."

"I'll guard against that," Goff confidently predicted, sitting down directly in front of the detective. "Twice, Carter, you have put it all over me, foiled my designs, and sent me to prison. But never again—never again! It would mean the chair for me next time, and I'll go to any extreme to prevent that."

"You are capable of going to any extreme, Goff, with a less potent incentive."

Goff laughed again, a cold, merciless laugh, that was utterly lacking any tinge of mirth. He clenched his hands on his knees, saying, with a sneer:

"You thought you were turning a very cute and clever trick last evening, Carter, didn't you?"

"What trick was that?" questioned Nick, coldly eying him.

"Posing as the undertaker's assistant."

"You knew me, then?"

"The moment you entered the house."

"Who, or what, put you wise?"

"Oh, I've got eyes, Carter, and very keen ones. You could not get by me in that flimsy make-up," Goff boasted.

He was much more inclined to brag, in fact, than to tell Nick that Mrs. Vancourt had seen and heard enough to suggest the subterfuge, of which she had given him immediate warning.

"I take no stock in that," Nick replied. "Your eyes never put you wise to it. You had other information. It is not material, however, so we'll let it go at that."

"I knew you, all right, and——"

"But you failed to get by with both of the blinds by which you attempted to deceive me."

"How deceive you?"

"You tried to convince me that Doctor Barbette and Hobart Goff could not be one and the same," said Nick contemptuously. "You appeared at the side window as Goff, and, when I pursued you, you entered a back door of the house, unobserved in the dark rear hall, and almost immediately appeared at the side door as Doctor Barbette, with your disguise replaced. That cut no ice, Goff, not a particle."

"You knew me, then, eh?"

"I suspected."

"And the other?"

"Your attempt to make me think that Laura Hopedale met you in Paris a year ago, when I knew Hobart Goff to be behind prison bars. That proved equally futile, for I learned this morning that Miss Hopedale never saw you in Paris."

"You are a discerning gink, Carter, much too dangerous a foe to be trifled with," Goff declared, with a snarl. "I'll make sure of you this time, as you meant to make sure of me."

"Oh, I'll get you yet, Goff, with all of your confederates," said Nick coldly. "I'm on to your game from A to Z."

"You are, eh?"

"It now is perfectly plain to me. You and Mrs. Vancourt and the rascal who knocked me out this morning——"

Nick was interrupted by a cry from the man outside.

"I say, Bart, get a move on!" he cried. "The skirt is coming up the road, and she's got her man."

Goff sprang to his feet and whipped a revolver from his pocket.

"This way, Hawley," he commanded. "Lock the kitchen door when you come in. Gag this dick with a handkerchief and join me in the front room. You must help me hold up the other."

A gaunt, roughly clad man of fifty hastened to obey, quickly binding a towel over Nick's mouth, and in a moment both men had disappeared into a front room, closing the door behind them.

Nick knew that he could accomplish nothing then and there. He felt sure, nevertheless, that both Chick and Patsy could not have been outwitted, his suspicions of Mrs. Vancourt not having been disclosed. He was confident that one or the other of his assistants would take advantage of any move that she had made.

Listening intently, Nick presently heard voices in the front room, but could not distinguish what was said. Then cries arose, with sounds of a brief scuffle, very brief, for Chick Carter made no great attempt to resist these rascals before learning just how matters stood, preferring to rely upon Patsy's advice and promised aid.

Less than ten minutes had passed when the door between the two rooms was opened again, and Chick was led into the kitchen. He, too, had been bound and gagged, and Hawley quickly forced him to one of the plain wooden chairs, to which he securely tied him with a strip of rope.

Though the gaze of the two detectives met, no significant expression appeared in Chick's eyes. He was taking no chance that anything of that kind might put the rascals on their guard.

Listening, in the meantime, Nick heard Goff questioning the woman in the front room.

"Did you have any trouble in getting him?" he inquired.

Mrs. Vancourt replied with a curious laugh.

"Not a particle, Bart," she said familiarly. "It was too easy. It was like netting a hooked fish."

"Was any one wise?"

"Not a soul."

"What of Garvan? Where was he?"

"Gone somewhere," said the woman tersely. "I think he went up to his room after lunch. I had not laid eyes on him for more than an hour. I'm sure he did not see us."

"We'll get him later, then, and wipe all three out of our path," Goff declared. "I know that nothing definite has yet been disclosed by the infernal meddlers. With them out of our way, we can easily force Gordon Boyd into making good."

"But he's kicking like a steer, Bart, because you killed the old man."

"Let him kick," snapped Goff. "We could not wait for him to die. Gordon will knuckle and marry you, all right, or we'll threaten to swear that he was our con-

federate in the murder and instigated the whole job. That will bring him to his milk."

"By Jove, that sounds good to me," thought Nick. "It lets Boyd out of the crime, at least, though he has been weak enough to lose his head for this woman. She has made an infernal fool of him, but thank Heaven it's no worse."

Nick was thinking of Laura Hopedale, and congratulating himself that he had not to add to her woe, as he had feared.

"Oh, I can land him, all right, Bart," Mrs. Vancourt predicted. "He's the softest ever, as far as that goes."

"If I can get the girl, too, we shall be all right," Goff rejoined. "If not, you'll have to come across with some of the Hopedale coin, and then I will bolt for Europe. What has become of Dorkins?"

"He went to telephone Boyd to join us."

"That's right. I directed him to do so."

"He ought to have showed up by this time."

"Ah, he's coming now," cried Goff, hearing steps outside.

He strode to a front window and looked out through one of the narrow panes.

Dorkins was just mounting the low stone steps.

There was another outside whom none suspected—Patsy Garvan.

It had been child's play to shadow Dorkins to this house. It was less than a mile from the restaurant in which the ruffian had lunched, and was a small, isolated wooden house in the belt of woods beyond the Hopedale golf links.

Crouching back of a wall, Patsy quickly sized up the place—the house itself, an open back porch, a small barn in the rear, all in a clearing somewhat back from the road and amid ill-kept surroundings.

"It's dollars to fried rings that both Nick and Chick are there by this time," Patsy said to himself, after watching Dorkins enter the house. "I could make dead sure of it, most likely, if I can get into that porch without being seen. I'll have a look in that direction, at least."

Patsy saw that he could not approach the front of the house undetected. Crouching below the rough stone wall, however, he easily made his way to a point back of the barn, which he entered through a refuse window in the rear.

While doing so he passed out of view of the road, and a man who approached and entered the house—Gordon Boyd.

Stealthily gazing from the partly open door of the barn, however, Patsy could see the interior of the porch, the kitchen door, and the closed blinds of the single window, which led him to suspect that that was the very room in which Nick and Chick might be found.

Slipping a revolver into his side pocket, he darted across the narrow strip of back yard and crept into the porch. From within voices then could be heard, but too far removed from the speakers to be in the kitchen.

Patsy's face took on a look of grim determination. He crouched at the kitchen door and peered through the keyhole. He saw that the key was gone, Hawley having removed it when he locked the door, and after a moment Patsy could see in the dim light within, both Nick and Chick securely bound to their chairs.

"Gee! that does settle it," he cried to himself. "I've got to take a chance. By Jove, that's Gordon Boyd's voice—he's here, too! What's that he's saying?"

Much to Patsy's surprise, Gordon Boyd was forcibly protesting against the heinous crime that had been committed. The threatening voices of Goff, Dorkins, and Mrs. Vancourt could also be heard, convincing Patsy that all hands were in the front room.

"Here goes!" he muttered. "I'll tackle them single-handed."

Noiselessly working his picklock, Patsy easily shot the bolt, then cautiously opened the door a couple of inches and peered into the room.

The only member of the gang to be seen was Hawley. He stood in the front room, with his shoulder against the casing of the door. He was absorbed in the angry altercation to which he was listening.

Patsy moved quickly, yet as noiseless as a shadow. He opened his knife, drew his revolver, and then crept into the room, closing the door. In another moment he was crouching back of Nick's chair, quickly cutting his bonds. Half a minute enabled him to liberate both detectives.

All this was accomplished with little danger of detection because of the passionate utterances of Gordon Boyd, who was bitterly shouting, addressing Goff and the woman.

"You may do your worst, both of you, and I'll take my medicine. If my uncle was murdered, as you now assert, I had no hand in it. Furthermore, I wash my hands of both of you. I will report the crime to the police. You may do your worst and——"

"Our worst," Goff sharply interrupted, "will be to involve you in the murder. We will swear that you——"

But Hobart Goff got no farther with his vicious threats. A shove from behind send Hawley headlong into the front room.

Then came Nick, Chick, and Patsy, with the latter's two revolvers, and Nick's sternly threatening voice took up Goff's angry words.

"You'll get no chance to swear to anything," he cried. "Up with your hands, all of you, or there'll be a dead man here."

"Yes, two of them," supplemented Patsy, with leveled weapon.

Only one man in the gang could have been expected to show fight in the face of such a situation, and he was by far too great a coward.

Goff sank back in his chair, wilting like a rag, and as white as if death had already been laid upon him.

Mrs. Vancourt uttered a shriek and fainted.

Dorkins and Hawley threw up their hands, with muttered growls and imprecations, which meant little indeed against the forces opposing them.

In less than five minutes all four were secured, and the sensational part of the strange case ended then and there.

It proved to be an easy matter to convict Goff and Mrs. Vancourt of the Hopedale murder. The former went to the electric chair for the crime, ending a knave who had given Nick Carter considerable trouble, and had long been a menace to the community.

Mrs. Vancourt, however, who had known Goff before his first imprisonment, and framed up the murder with him after his escape, was given a life sentence.

It was easy to prove that Gordon Boyd had had no hand in the murder, and the gratitude of the young

man, as well as that of Laura Hopedale and the Thorntons, may be more easily imagined than described. The experience proved to be a salutary one, as the subsequent manly career of Gordon Boyd plainly showed.

The Carters were liberally paid for the splendid service they had rendered him, as their respective bank accounts also evinced.

THE END.

"The Vivisectionists; or, Nick Carter and the Scientific Criminals," is the title of the story that you will find in the next issue of this weekly, No. 118, out December 12th. In many respects it is one of the most startling stories of a crime and its detection that has ever been published.

The Riddle and the Ring.

By GORDON MACLAREN.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 113 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER XXV.

THE FACE IN THE CANDLELIGHT.

A second later the hall door was burst open, and a voice sounded from the opening: "What's up, Joyce? Has he got away?"

A flood of imprecations answered him as the detective scrambled painfully to his feet.

"You fool!" he roared. "Strike a light, quick! Don't stand there like a dummy. Strike a light! He's in this room—he can't get away! Where in blazes is that gun of mine? A-h!"

The tiny, wavering flame from a match clove the inky blackness, and showed Joyce crouching near the mantel, the recovered automatic ready in one hand, and his keen, dark eyes roving swiftly about the barren place.

For a moment he did not move a muscle; then, with an oath, he sprang to his feet. The flickering flame made odd, grotesque dancing shadows in the corners of the room, but aside from the detective and his assistant by the door, there was no one else there. Lawrence had disappeared.

"He's slipped into the front room!" snapped Joyce. "He can't get out of the house—that's impossible! Where's my flash light? Yell down to the boys to be on the lookout. They mustn't stir from the foot of the stairs. You go down and get that lantern out of the kitchen. We've got to have light, and my blooming battery's gone."

He had scarcely spoken when the match burned out, and darkness infolded them again.

It was during this second period of eclipse that Barry softly pushed open the door of the front room, and emerged into the hall. He heard the detective's angry voice roaring out orders from the back room, and was conscious, also, of excited talking in the hall below. Escape that way was quite impossible, and, since there was no time to hunt up a convenient fire escape, the only thing left was the roof.

With nerves tingling, and a certain exhilaration possessing him at the thought of outwitting this fellow who had been so annoying, Barry slid over to the stairs, and began to feel his way up them with extreme caution. He was not more than halfway up before the fellow clattering down for the lantern gave him a chance to take the remainder of the flight in two jumps without risk of being overheard. The next instant, however, he was halted in his tracks by the appearance of Joyce at the foot of the stairs.

As long as the fellow stood there it was impossible to move without being discovered, so Barry possessed his soul with patience, trusting that, when the light arrived, they would enter the front room first, and give him a chance to find his way to the roof.

Meanwhile, he stretched out one hand, and began to explore with his fingers everything within reach. The stairs curved sharply about three steps from the top, and just around the corner Lawrence touched the handle of a door. From its position he knew that it could lead into nothing more than a shallow closet. On the other side of the narrow hall was nothing but smooth wall, with here and there a sagging strip of moldy paper. Underfoot the floor was bare, carpetless as the rest of the house.

Presently the sound of thudding footsteps came to Barry's ears again, and a moment later the fitful, dancing gleams of light below told him that the man was hurrying back with the lantern.

"Hustle up, Billy!" Joyce cried impatiently. "You come along, too, Jim. Don't need more than one to stay by the door. He can't get past us."

Under cover of the noise below, Lawrence gripped the knob of the closet door, and wrenched it open. It came with a reluctant screech of rusty hinges which sent his heart into his throat, but apparently the sound passed unnoticed. Joyce was giving rapid directions to his men, and, when one of them finally had been stationed at the door of the back room, the other two advanced to the front of the lower hall.

"Better come out peaceable, Lawrence," Barry heard him say. "You're cornered, and can't possibly get away."

There was no answer, of course. With a muttered exclamation, the detective thrust open the lower door, calling to his men to look sharp, and leaped into the room, followed closely by his companion with the light.

Instantly Barry pressed the switch of the pocket light, and flashed it swiftly around the hall. There was no sign of any ladder, or even a skylight. Was it possible there was no way to the roof? Desperate, he whirled around, and turned the shaft of light into the closet. His eyes fell on the lower rungs of a ladder, and he gave a sigh of relief.

There was not an instant to lose, for they would soon find that he had left the second floor. He meant to be more cautious than ever, but, supposing the closet to be as empty as the rest of the house, he gave no thought to the possible presence of obstacles. The result was that he struck an unseen shelf with his head and shoulders, and the next moment an empty can of some sort clattered down, and rolled out into the hall with noise enough to wake the dead.

There was a shout of surprise and triumph from below, followed by the sound of running feet, but Barry waited to hear no more. Slamming the door behind him, he darted up the ladder, one hand outstretched before him. When the fingers encountered a rusty bolt, he struck it out of the socket with one blow of his clenched fist. Then,

with lowered head, he brought his powerful shoulders against the skylight with all the force of his trained muscles.

Bang! bang! bang! Three times he flung himself against something as immovable as rock. Bang! bang! The wooden covering creaked ominously, but scarcely gave at all, and Barry groaned inwardly at the sudden recollection of the ice and snow which must be spread over it, sealing it most effectually.

Scrambling up another step, he placed his shoulders against the boards and heaved strenuously. As he struggled in desperation he heard his pursuers reach the hall below, and a hand rattled the knob of the closet door.

"He's in here, fellows," came in a muffled voice, then, just as the door was jerked open, admitting a stream of light to the dark hole, Lawrence gave a final heave, and tumbled his way out on the flat, snowy roof, white and gleaming in the brilliant starlight of the cloudless night.

Like a flash he had whirled around and slammed the cover back on the skylight. In another second he was running with long, lithe, silent strides across the roof.

Recklessly he leaped a low parapet to the next roof, raced across its narrow, white expanse, cleared the second parapet, and had almost reached the third when the lifting of the skylight behind him made him stop like a flash and huddle down behind a chimney.

For a second he crouched there, breathing hard. Barely six feet beyond was an abrupt descent to a lower roof. Just how much of a drop it was he could not tell, but it could scarcely be too great for him to make it. The houses all seemed much the same general height.

He wished that he had kept on to the parapet, and risked their seeing him. It would be much harder to do it now unobserved, yet he could not stay where he was. The minute they found his footprints in the snow they had only to follow the trail, and nab him by the chimney. What a fool he was not to have thought of that before!

A stealthy glance around the brick chimney showed him that two of the pursuers had emerged onto the roof, but were apparently waiting for the others. He had a moment more of grace, and instantly he began to back noiselessly toward the dividing wall.

He reached it safely; then, just as he was lowering himself over, some one sighted him, and sounded the alarm.

Barry dropped like a flash, and landing, somewhat shaken up, about six feet below, spun around, and started across the roof. Even in his haste he noticed that the snow here had been cleared away in a square space, about which were hung lines for drying clothes. There was no ice on the scuttle, either, and without a moment's hesitation he dropped on his knees and pulled hard at the wooden frame.

It was unlatched, and, with a gasp of joy, Lawrence jerked it up, and slid into the opening. In his haste his foot missed the ladder, and the scuttle, descending with cruel force on his fingers, very nearly sent him tumbling into the hall below.

He managed to keep his grip, however, till his feet were planted on the ladder. Then, with a grunt of pain, he released his hands, and fairly flung himself down the remaining rungs.

At the bottom he paused a second, fumbling for the flash light. He realized that he was not much better off than he had been on the roof. Joyce and his gang would certainly suspect where he had gone, and, ten to one, would follow. He could not linger, therefore, and the instant he found the location of the stairs he hurried down them, praying inwardly that he might meet no one before he reached the door.

The thought had scarcely passed through his mind before he realized that some one was coming up from the hall below. He stopped and listened. It was a slow, heavy tread, but the sound of skirts brushing against the wall told him that it was a woman. She held a candle in her hand, and the wavering light, flickering against the wall, kept pace with her slow ascent.

Would she stop at the second floor, or come on to where he stood in a curve of the next flight of stairs? That was the question which pounded monotonously through Barry's brain as he watched that spot of light creep higher and higher. If she did not have to pass him, there was a good chance of his escaping after she had gone into her room. If not——

As she climbed the last step and stood there, panting heavily, Lawrence scarcely dared take a breath. Then, with infinite thankfulness, he saw her step forward, and turn the knob of one of the doors opening off the passage. The latch clicked, and in a moment more she would have been out of the way, had not there come to her ears the unmistakable sound of the scuttle being raised.

With a sharp ejaculation of surprise and fear, she turned about, and took a quick step straight toward where Lawrence was crouching. For a second the latter stood as one paralyzed, staring at the face now plainly visible in the light of the candle.

It was the coarse, evil face of Mrs. Kerr, his old landlady. He had stumbled into that very house on Twenty-fourth Street which had been the scene of so much despair and misery, and which he had never expected to see again.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE HAND OF FATE.

The woman did not come forward immediately, but stood staring upward, in the attitude of one listening. It was a very brief space of time, to be sure, but it gave Barry a chance to pull himself together and recover from the petrifying amazement that had stricken him at the discovery that he was actually in his old lodging house.

When at length another sound from above started her toward him again, Lawrence had recovered his wits, and seized upon the only possible chance which was left him.

"Good evening, Mrs. Kerr," he said blandly, leisurely descending the remaining few steps. "I left a few small personal belongings in my room, and——"

The expression on the woman's face as she staggered back against the railing was so extraordinary that it fairly took Barry's breath away. There was amazement, of course, and a quick gasp of fear escaped her lips, but in a second every emotion was swallowed up in a kind of triumphant gloating which was horrible to see.

"So you're back," she said, in an odd, suppressed voice. "I begun to think I wasn't never goin' to see you, an' here you are of your own free will. Luck, I calls it—nothin' but luck."

Lawrence's first thought was that she had been drinking, and a moment later he saw that she was creeping closer

to him, with a crablike motion, at the same time maneuvering so as to block the narrow passage.

What her idea was he could not conceive, but he had no desire to be detained a second longer, especially as the sounds from above told him that Joyce and his men were already descending the ladder from the roof.

"Isn't it luck?" he agreed, smiling genially. "Of course, I never thought I'd find you up at this hour, but, since I have, I may as well give you what you want right now."

He thrust one hand into an inner pocket, as if to produce something, and the next instant had leaped forward, snatching the candle from her as he did so. As he darted past her in the darkness, he felt a futile clutch of hands on his coat, and then her voice was raised in a series of piercing shrieks: "Help! Murder! Jim! Jim!"

Taking the stairs in great leaps, Lawrence thought he had never heard such bedlam in his life. The woman continued to scream at the top of her voice. Somewhere a door was jerked open, and a man's harsh voice, adding to the tumult, accelerated Barry's flight.

He flung himself at the door, one hand instinctively touched the spring lock, while the other yanked it open. He had the wit to remember a second antiquated catch, seldom used, and ponderous to undo, and promptly snapped it down before slamming the door behind him.

Without an instant's hesitation, he ran straight toward Tenth Avenue. Fortunately the street was dark and deserted, and he reached the corner without encountering any one.

As he whirled around into the avenue, he looked swiftly backward, and saw the door of Mrs. Kerr's house burst open, throwing a shaft of light out across the icy sidewalk. Into that path of light two figures hurried, one tall, thin, and wearing a slouch hat, the other chunky and shapeless.

"My dear landlady and Jim, whoever he may be," Lawrence murmured, as he started briskly south on the avenue. "I wish 'em the joy of their hunt for me. What an old harridan that woman is! She positively made my flesh creep when she was coming at me in the hall. Wonder what she was after?"

He did not waste much thought on the matter, however. Very likely the woman was drunk, and it was rather startling for her to encounter a man who did not belong in the house. At all events, it was immaterial. He had managed to get out of the scrape successfully, so he devoted himself to brushing off his coat and hat and putting on his gloves, while hastening toward the car line on Twenty-third Street.

He was more than thankful for the whim which had caused him to wear a soft hat of black velour. It had stayed with him through all the excitement of the evening, and now needed only a deft touch or two to make it quite presentable.

As the car bowled eastward at a good clip, Barry chuckled once or twice at the thought of Joyce's discomfiture when driven back to the roof by those piercing shrieks from Mrs. Kerr.

"He'll be mad as a wet hen," he thought amusedly. "Serves him right, though, for trying such a game."

Altogether, Barry was very much pleased with the way things had turned out. While he had come no nearer to solving the mystery which seemed to surround him, he had at least learned the lesson of caution, and it would be an extremely difficult matter to catch him unawares, as he had been caught to-night.

He was very much annoyed, of course, at having been forced to break his engagement with Jack and the others, but that had not been his fault, and his explanation must appease them. It was only half past ten now, and perhaps he could get hold of the Yale man that night. Hamersley would certainly be entertained by a recital of the evening's experiences.

Entering the lobby of the St. Albans a little later, he was hurrying toward the telephones with that idea in mind, when one of the clerks stopped him.

"Just a moment, Mr. Lawrence," he called. "Here's a letter for you, which should have been delivered yesterday. It was sent to the St. Athol by mistake, and reached us after you went out this evening."

Barry took the letter, and stared at the unfamiliar writing in a puzzled way. Then he tore open the envelope, and hastily took out the several sheets of closely written note paper it contained. The next instant, as he caught sight of the inclosure, his heart began to beat loudly and irregularly, flooding his face with flaming crimson.

It was a crisp, new ten-dollar bill, and, though he turned the pages with slightly trembling fingers to find the signature, it really was not necessary. Deep down in his heart he knew that it was from Shirley Rives.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LETTER.

For a moment or two Lawrence stood there staring at the name. Then, pulling himself together, he turned on his heel and made for the elevator. Whatever the letter contained, it was impossible to read it down there.

Once in his sitting room, he switched on the lights, and, flinging himself into a chair without even taking time to remove his coat, plunged into a perusal of the letter:

"My Dear Mr. Lawrence: As I sit here, in a perfectly charming boudoir, done in blue, with lovely old mahogany furniture, the things you said last night about the strangeness of chance come irresistibly back to me. I could not help but feel then that fate or destiny, or what you will, must have had something to do with bringing us together, and perhaps that was why I let myself drift with the current in a manner which was, to say the least, decidedly unconventional. Really, you know, I'm not in the habit of taking supper and favors from men I've never seen before!

"The story you told of what had happened to you was unreal enough in all conscience, but never for an instant did I imagine when I left you that something infinitely more extraordinary, something a thousand times more impossible, was coming to me."

Lawrence started and frowned with perplexity; but he reflected that scarcely anything could be unbelievable after what had already transpired. He went on, reading eagerly.

"It is much too long to put into writing. Besides, I have a notion that I'd like to tell it to you, so I'll only give you enough to whet your appetite and stir your curiosity.

"I went into that house on Forty-eighth Street despairing, hopeless—perhaps not quite so hopeless as I had been two hours before; but, still, I had little enough to hope for. I tried my best to keep you from seeing how utterly miserable I was and how completely at my wits' end, but I think you guessed something of it in spite of my efforts.

"I was there for less than ten minutes, then I came away in a private brougham with a woman I had never seen before. There were two men on the box. Inside there were furs—soft, luxurious furs—into which one could snuggle down and be warm at last. There was some sort of electric-heating apparatus, and I could smell the perfume of roses clustered in a hanging vase. Do you wonder that I thought of Cinderella and the pumpkin coach, and was afraid it would all vanish into nothing?

"We drove to a splendid house on the avenue, and there I was made to go to bed at once in a wonderful, carved, four-poster with silk hangings. This morning it was still there; it had not vanished in the night. I had not dreamed it, or, if I had, I am dreaming still."

Lawrence laughed aloud; but he wondered if he himself were not dreaming. But he finished the letter with no lessening of interest.

"At first I went about in a sort of daze, but, little by little, I'm becoming convinced that it is real. We have been shopping all morning, and somehow the quantities of lovely clothes which are constantly arriving are not like dream clothes. There is a dance, to-night, too. Fancy going to a dance again! That's almost the most impossible thing of all. It isn't really so long since the last one, but I feel as if I had lived a thousand years since then.

"Isn't it stranger than any fairy tale? Do you wonder that I feel as if this wasn't Shirley Rives at all, but some one else? And, stranger than anything else, is the fact that I owe it all to you and your helping me through the 'Gates of Chance' last night. If I had come straight to Sally's, as I meant to, nothing would have happened. If we had not met in the square, if we had not lingered at the restaurant, even, nothing would have happened. If one single thing had occurred to vary the time of my reaching the house by five short minutes, there would be nothing to tell you now.

"I know I'm perfectly hateful not to give away the secret—you see, I'm taking it for granted that you are a little curious about it—but I have a selfish desire to tell it to you; to try and show you something of how strange and wonderful and utterly staggering it has all been to me. I'm sure you'll let me, won't you—soon?

"Sincerely yours, SHIRLEY RIVES."

Below the girl's signature was written the address of a house in the most exclusive section of Fifth Avenue, a section where dwelt only people of great wealth, and usually of equally great social position.

Lawrence stared at it, his face dazed and bewildered. Then he turned back to the first sheet, and read the letter slowly through to the very end again. It was utterly baffling and incomprehensible, yet through it all there ran a strain of perfect truth and high-minded sweetness which was unmistakable. The realization of this, coupled with a remembrance of what he had once tried to make himself believe about Shirley Rives, brought a rush of color to his cheeks, and an expression of shame into his pleasant face.

"She's true blue to the very core," he murmured at length. "I can't imagine what sort of luck it is that's come to her; the whole business sounds like a tale from the 'Arabian Nights.' But I know one thing—I was the biggest fool in all creation ever to have doubted her for a second."

He glanced again at the end of the letter, and a swift smile curved his sensitive lips.

"Will I come and let her tell me all about it?" he said aloud. *"Will I?* And soon? Well, I guess yes!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE HOUSE ON THE AVENUE.

Though he tried his house and one or two other places where Jock Hamersley was likely to be at this hour, Lawrence was unable to get his friend on the phone. Somehow, he was not altogether sorry. He certainly owed an apology and some sort of reparation to the men he had been forced to leave in the lurch in this abrupt, seemingly ill-mannered fashion, but he was just as well pleased to have it all put off until to-morrow. With a mind full of Shirley Rives and her extraordinary letter, he did not particularly fancy the idea of doing anything but just sit there in his room and think it all over.

Having taken off his things, and made himself comfortable, he read her letter over for the third time, gaining nothing from his perusal save an intense desire to see the girl as soon as he could, and hear from her own lips the details of the amazing good fortune which had come so opportunely.

Of course, it could not be stranger than his own experiences during the past three days; but the manner in which it had followed so close upon the heels of that, brought again to Barry that old feeling of being in the grip of circumstance, the conviction that fate was molding her life as well as his, without consulting either of them even in the smallest detail.

"I suppose it wouldn't be at all the thing to call there in the morning," he thought impatiently, as he was getting into bed, long after midnight. "Hang it all! I don't see how I'm going to restrain myself until the conventional hour."

While he was breakfasting the next morning, however, he resolved to set convention at defiance for this once, at least. Almost as fervent as his desire to hear Miss Rives' story was his eagerness to set himself right with her. He did not wish her to labor an hour longer than was absolutely necessary under the impression that his failure to call in answer to her letter was due to any possible lack of interest on his part. He must see her this morning, and so he determined to send up some flowers with his card, and the intimation that he would follow himself in an hour or so.

On his way out he stopped at the desk to obtain some more money from the wallet he had left in the safe. He had done this every morning, but now, as he opened it, the realization came to him for the first time that his supply was growing low. The thousand dollars had been placed in one compartment, leaving his expense money in another, and, as he took out about a hundred dollars, he was astonished to find how comparatively little was left. He was not conscious of having been especially ex-

travagant, but he had obeyed the unknown donor's injunctions to the letter, and had not spared expense.

"By Jove!" he muttered, as he left the hotel and walked toward Fifth Avenue. "I'll have to go slow, or I'll be dipping into my capital. It's astonishing how money melts away on comparatively little things. I must begin to economize."

Evidently he did not mean to begin quite at once, however. He made his way directly to an expensive flower shop on the avenue, where he selected a huge box of very costly roses, wrote a line on his card, and ordered them sent at once to Miss Rives. As he left the shop, he consoled himself for the flatness of his bill case by the reflection that this was a private matter, which could be paid out of his own money.

The hour and a half which followed seemed to pass on leaden wings. Barry had never known a period of time to drag so boringly. He could not enjoy his morning walk, and, though he had several errands to do, which ordinarily would have consumed the better part of an hour, it seemed as if the salesmen were conspiring to attend to his wants with positively supernatural briskness.

"If I were in a hurry," he thought crossly, "I'd cool my heels in each store for fifteen or twenty minutes. That's always the way when you want to kill time."

At length, when the hands of his watch had crept around to eleven, Barry squared his shoulders with a determined gesture, and, making his way swiftly through from Broadway to the Waldorf cab stand, procured a taxi, which deposited him less than ten minutes later before a very imposing residence up in the seventies, facing the park.

And, now that he was actually here, and the taxi dismissed, a sudden, curious timidity began to besiege Lawrence. The marble front, with its heavy, ornamental carvings, was almost oppressive in its atmosphere of wealth and exclusiveness. The wonderfully wrought bronze grille which guarded the imposing approach, even though one of the doors was flung back, revealing the elaborate mosaic of the square entrance, seemed fashioned for the sole purpose of excluding the presumptuous stranger who sought admission.

The amazing contrast between this palatial residence and the desperate, homeless girl he had encountered in Madison Square little more than forty-eight hours before, struck Barry anew with startling force, and made him hesitate at the foot of the broad, shallow sweep of marble steps.

A dozen doubts and questions flashed through his mind in that brief pause. Then, with a swift, characteristic flinging back of his head, he thrust them from him in a flash.

"What a fool I am!" he muttered angrily. "I swore I'd never doubt her again, and I won't."

A second later he reached the entrance, and firmly pressed the electric button.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LAWRENCE PLEADS.

Almost on the instant of Lawrence's ringing the bell, the door was swung open by a footman in rich, quiet livery, who stood aside while Barry entered, and, having closed the door, led the way down the paneled hall.

"Is Miss Rives at home?" Lawrence asked briefly.

"This way, if you please," said the footman noncommittally, indicating a tiny elevator hidden behind hangings of rich damask.

The car ascended noiselessly, and Lawrence stepped out into a wide hall, the walls of which were lined with tapestries, while underfoot were heavy Persian rugs, laid upon some sort of matting, which made them thick and soft as velvet.

The footman took Barry's card, and, crossing noiselessly to a doorway, drew aside the hangings.

"Will you wait in the drawing-room, sir?" he murmured.

The room which Barry entered was long and lofty, and almost oppressive in its wealth of furnishings. The richly carved mantel of mellow Caen marble looked as if it might have been transported entire from some French château. The walls were hung with tapestries, while here and there a wonderful painting gave relief with its gorgeous coloring and the richness of its carved frame. The chairs, tables, cabinets, and other pieces of furniture which filled the great room were antiques of rare beauty and value; while scattered everywhere were carved ivories, miniatures, exquisite old silver, and wonderful porcelain in such bewildering array that Barry decided it would take weeks properly to examine and appreciate each separate piece.

The room was filled with flowers in great bowls and vases, and the air was heavy with their fragrance. Lawrence was wondering whether his roses were among the masses of lilies and violets, when the soft swish of trailing garments brought him hurriedly to his feet just as the velvet hangings were parted and Shirley Rives stood on the threshold.

"It was very nice of you to come, Mr. Lawrence," she said, as he sprang forward to greet her; "and your roses are charming."

"It's you who are nice to receive me at such an hour," Barry returned quickly. "I know I should have restrained my impatience until this afternoon, but your letter only came last night—it was sent first to the St. Athol—and I simply couldn't wait." He hesitated, looking down into her eyes, and a slow flush crept into his face. "You see," he went on bravely, "I was at Sherry's myself on Tuesday night."

For a second she stared at him in astonishment. "At the dance?" she exclaimed. "Why, I never——"

"Of course you didn't," Barry returned swiftly. "I came away very soon."

"But you saw me?"

Her tone was perplexed, and a tiny, puzzled wrinkle had leaped into her smooth, low forehead. Then, as Barry nodded, a sudden gleam of comprehension flashed into her dark eyes.

"You saw me!" she exclaimed, in an odd voice. "And my letter never reached you until last night! What must you have thought? But come; let's sit down and talk comfortably."

She moved gracefully across the room to a great carved chair near one of the windows. Lawrence drew up another chair and sat down. For a second or two neither of them spoke; then the girl bent forward a little, her chin resting on one hand.

"Well," she questioned, "tell me what you thought?"

The flush had deepened in his face, and his muscular, well-shaped fingers were lacing and interlacing, an unconscious key to the perturbation of his mind. Now that he had seen her again, his folly at having doubted her seemed more utterly absurd and idiotic than ever. He hated desperately to tell her the truth, yet he knew he must. The sooner it was over the better.

"I was a fool!" he said brusquely. "I thought you had been making sport of me. I thought you had made up that whole story for a lark. I realized long before your letter came that such a thing was impossible; but at the dance I was simply stunned. I had just come from the house on Forty-eighth Street, where they told me you had never been there. Your friend, Miss Barton, said she had not seen you in months, and, after what you ——"

The girl started slightly. "Of course!" she murmured. "I forgot all about Sally. But surely Mrs. Weston must have——"

"She was away. I didn't see her. The maid said you weren't there, and certainly hadn't been there overnight. Miss Barton knew nothing whatever about you. It looked as if the earth had opened and swallowed you up, so you can imagine my feelings when I caught sight of you at the dance. When I left you the night before, you hadn't a friend in the city but this stenographer, or a cent——"

"You forget the ten dollars," she murmured demurely, her long lashes sweeping her cheeks as she played with a jeweled chain hanging from her neck.

"That didn't count," he retorted.

"Not in the way you mean, perhaps," she supplemented. "And so you went from Mrs. Weston's to the dance, and saw me there?"

"N-not directly. It was too early, and I was troubled and worried to know what had become of you. I drove around a little, and walked through the square——"

Her lids suddenly lifted, and she looked oddly at him.

"Madison Square?" she questioned swiftly.

He nodded. "Yes. I—er—just wanted to walk a little where it was quiet and I could think. Then I joined my friends, and drove with them to Sherry's. I hadn't been there half an hour before I saw you."

"I suppose it did seem a trifle odd," she remarked, glancing out of the window.

"Odd doesn't quite express it. There you were, in a wonderful gown, with pearls and things, and talking to three or four men at once as if you'd known them all your life. Of course, I couldn't believe my senses at first; and when at last I was sure, I—well, it was all so bewildering and impossible that I couldn't seem to stay there."

"You mean you couldn't stay because you thought I'd been deceiving you?" she said quietly.

"There didn't seem to be any other explanation," he pleaded. "Next day I came to my senses, and knew that there must be some other reason. Of what it could be I hadn't the most remote conception; but I knew that you weren't the sort to make believe to that extent; and it was a big relief, I can tell you."

He hesitated a second and bent forward slightly, his forehead wrinkled and his eyes fixed intently on her lovely face.

"Please forgive me," he begged, "and admit that there were extenuating circumstances."

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE BROKEN DAM.

By EDWARD S. ELLIS

Rattlesnake Run is a winding valley, varying in width from an eighth to nearly a mile, and located in western Pennsylvania. The surrounding country contains much excellent timber, and many hundred acres have been purchased by capitalists, who erected sawmills at different points, where the lumber was prepared for the market.

One of the most extensive operators was Reuben Morrell. He and his wife had been pioneers in that section, had moved to Philadelphia, while still quite young, made a comfortable fortune, and then returned to the region of their old home, where the head of the family engaged in the lumber business. His industrious wife insisted upon accompanying him, even though she was obliged to take with her their little girl Jennie and their only son Tom, who was just sixteen years of age.

The family lived happily in their log cabin, standing on a slope of the mountain, a mile below the great dam, while scattered here and there were a dozen similar rude dwellings, in which the laborers and their wives and children made their home. Mr. Morrell paid good wages, was a stern though just employer, honest, and among the hardest workers in the valley, and, therefore, certain at all times of the best services of his employees.

Rather earlier than usual in spring he bade his family good-by for a week or less, while he went eastward to sell the lumber he had ready or soon would have ready for the market. It began raining on the forenoon of the day of his departure, and continued, without intermission, for three days and nights. A fine, drizzling mist was in the air when the fourth night closed in upon the valley.

"We have had more rain this week than I ever knew before," remarked Tom, after the evening meal was finished and the little family were grouped together, with Jennie sitting on the knee of her big brother; "I never saw so much water above the dam as there was this afternoon."

"Do you think there is any danger?" asked the mother, with an anxious look which showed she had been thinking of the matter before her son referred to it.

"I don't know what to think," was the reply. "You know father took pains to make the dam as strong as it could be, and he was sure it was safe against any pressure that would ever be brought against it."

"Won't the sluiceway carry off all the extra water?"

"It ought to, but there's one trouble; the water has been pouring over the outlet all day so fast that you can see how much bigger it has made the stream running down the valley, but I took a look at it this afternoon and saw that several drift logs have caught on top of the dam at the mouth of the outlet, and have choked it up a good deal."

The mother's face grew more distressed. The misgivings that had troubled her all day were intensified by what her son just told her. If the outlet to the dam was barely sufficient to release the vast surplus of water, even

when the passageway was clear, the peril must become grave if any obstruction became wedged in it.

"I tried to free the logs so they would drift over the dam," added Tom; "but they were fast. I told Mike and Jake about them, and they said it was getting so dark they would attend to them in the morning."

"I think we had better leave the house," said the mother.

"But we are in no more danger than the rest of the people, and there's no place up the mountain where we can spend the night."

"There's the cabin which your father set out to build last autumn."

"And never finished it; the logs are no better than all outdoors."

"They are better than being here, if the dam breaks."

"But I don't believe it will break," continued Tom, with the buoyancy of youth; "at any rate, I'm willing to take the risk; aren't you, Jennie?" he said, tossing the little one in the air and chucking her chin as she came down in his arms.

"I isn't afraid," she replied; "I will stay with you, and God will take care of us all."

The mother was in sore perplexity. None knew better than she the fearful consequences of a giving away of the dam. It would carry death and destruction in its path, and they would be as helpless as so many infants in the grasp of a cyclone.

Prudence urged her to go with her children to the top of the mountain, beyond the possible wild rush of the waters, and there stay until all peril should pass. But it was the month of March, the air was piercingly cold, there was snow on the ground, and, though they might take considerable clothing and a number of blankets with them, the night in the half-finished hut would be uncomfortable to the last degree.

She suffered herself at last to be dissuaded by her son, who was never in higher spirits than on that evening, when the awful shadow of coming disaster seemed to rest on the humble home.

She told neither of them to remove their clothing when they climbed the sloping ladder to the loft to retire for the night. When left alone, the mother, leaving the candle standing on the table, opened the door and stepped out in the damp, chilly darkness.

The gloom was impenetrable. The dull roar of the water overflowing the dam came to her ears as she had heard it in the stillness of night many a time before, and she knew the swift flow in the creek a few yards away was greater than usual, but still not to a dangerous extent. She glanced in the direction of the cabins where the men dwelt with their families. Lights twinkled from a few windows, but the gloom was too deep for her to see anything more.

"Surely they would know if there is any danger," she reflected; "if they are content to sleep and rest, why should not I?"

She turned to reënter the cabin, and then stopped, transfixed. A heavy crashing sound, like the fall of an enormous mass of rock for a mile down the mountainside broke upon her ear, followed by an increasing roar, such as she had twice heard when the cyclone was careering through the forest and uprooting the giant trees, as though they were twigs in its path.

"The dam has broken," she exclaimed, with a wild cry, which penetrated the huts of the workmen and set them astir. Then she dashed into the house, hurriedly fastened the door, and climbed the ladder with desperate haste.

Possibly she might have escaped had she fled without an instant's delay, but she was a mother and could not forget her children; better perish with them than to be saved without them.

The candle was left in its place below, and its yellow light came through the opening at the head of the ladder. Tom had been roused by the cry of his parent, and sat on the edge of the bed, staring wonderingly in the gloom, while Jennie was only half awake.

The mother had barely time to make the dreadful announcement of what was coming, when it seemed as if a broadside from a war frigate had struck the cabin. The spray was dashed between the logs, which were so closed as to prevent an ordinary driving rain from entering, the roar was overwhelming, the heavy structure swayed, twisted, and wrenched itself, as if struggling in the grip of some terrible power, then it spun around and went dancing downward in the resistless rush of the black torrent.

What followed was never clear to any one of the inmates. They were flung hither and thither, everything was in blank darkness, the icy waters were around them, but somehow through it all they were able to breathe, and, with the exception of little Jennie, no one at any time wholly lost consciousness.

A strange Providence saved the inmates, when nearly a dozen members of the workmen's families were drowned. Beyond a doubt, the cabin of the Morrells at one time was fully twenty feet below the surface of the torrent. This must have lasted several minutes, when, in spinning around a sharp turn in Rattlesnake Run, it became wedged in an extraordinary way among several trees. The terrified mother and son expected it to be wrenched loose again, and carried to destruction. As it was, some of the timbers were torn apart, but the volume of water subsided so rapidly that the broken structure held its place, and by and by was as firm as when it stood on its original foundation. It was a number of days before mother and children recovered from the bruises and shock of that dreadful night, but they never ceased to thank Heaven for their wonderful deliverance from death.

BREAKING A GLASS WITH THE VOICE.

The phenomenon of breaking glass by the mere vibrations produced by sound was known in the remotest times, since mention is made in Scripture of a penalty laid on any one who should permit his dog to bark in a vessel so as to break it.

Quite recently an endeavor was made to prove that force might be produced by the storage of sound, an enthusiastic writer on the subject even going so far as to say that a locomotive might be moved by a single diapason. That is doubtless a visionary's dream, but here is a result which is more practicable:

Hold an ordinary thin wineglass by the foot, and strike its edge so as to make it ring. It will produce a certain note. Approach your mouth quickly to the glass, and cry the same note into it as loud as possible. Almost invariably the glass, the vibrations of which are thus greatly intensified, is shattered in pieces by the sound.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

New Inventions.

An electrical apparatus recently invented gives warning of the approach of a thunderstorm several hours before any clouds appear. It is operated somewhat like a small wireless plant. There are receiving atennæ, or wires, which are affected by the faint impulses from electrical disturbances in the vicinity. These impulses cause the closing of an alarm-clock circuit. At first the signals are far apart, but as the storm approaches, the bell begins to ring continuously. The device is used to warn electrical companies to increase their lighting power.

To protect automobilists from rain and wind, a Wisconsin inventor has patented a waterproof skirt, which snaps into place with steel springs at the waist and ankles.

For emergency exits in public places, a Chicago man has invented a door with panels, so mounted that pressure at any point opens the latch and permits the door to swing outward.

To facilitate milking of cows, there has been invented a substantial can, that also serves as a stool, the milk being drawn into a long-necked funnel.

A simple device invented by a Seattle, Wash., man, prevents the accumulation of rain, mist, or fog on windshields of automobiles. The invention, which is operated by hand, resembles a cylinder, about twelve inches long, and has a handle. A strip of rubber is attached to one side and this is rubbed over the surface of the windshield, removing all water and mud. By turning a little screw at the end of the device, a felt surface, saturated with a mixture of oil and four other ingredients is exposed. This is drawn across the glass and applies a solution which prevents the accumulation of water or fog.

On a new kind of saw the teeth are arranged in alternate groups—four pointing forward and then four pointing back. The saw cuts either wood or metal and is made in a variety of shapes. For cutting metal it is said to be twice as efficient as saws of the usual pattern. The blades do not break as easily.

Submarine With Gills Like Fish.

Thomas Edison, the inventor, is at work on a submarine for the United States navy which will be the most powerful and efficient craft of the kind. The deep-sea vessel will be provided with gills similar to those of a fish. His experiments cover the past year and are nearly perfected. When he presents his boat for the inspection of naval experts, it will be possible for it to remain under water indefinitely, extracting the oxygen for fresh air from the sea water.

This was learned when, in company with the secretary of the navy and Mrs. Daniels, Mrs. Edison, and Miller H. Hutchinson, chief engineer of the Edison laboratories, at Orange, N. J., the inventor made his first trip of inspection to a battleship, the *New York*, at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Edison visited the submarine G-4 to inspect the working of a storage battery which he designed and built at the request of the navy department. Batteries heretofore used have been of a type which gives off chlorine gas when it comes in contact with salt water. This makes the men susceptible to pneumonia.

It is next to impossible to keep the batteries of a submarine from becoming wet with sea water. It is announced that Eidson's battery has met all tests required of it.

The submarine with gills interested the navy men. Edison explained that he believed he had perfected the application of the principle and said that he had arrived at his solution by actual study of fish. The only limit to the cruising of the new submarine will be its fuel capacity.

Dog Bears Message of Death.

While hunting in the mountains near Fears, Ark., Ivan Manning, a farmer, accidentally discharged his gun, wounding himself fatally. He was five miles from any house, and he knew he could not live. He tore his collar from his neck and dipping a small stick in his own blood, wrote a message to his family, in which he told them he was shot and the probable result. He then tied the collar around his dog's neck and told him to go home. Five hours later the wife and son of the wounded man found him by following the dog. He was carried home, where he died three days later.

Needle Points Hide in Body.

A needle point in the human body is nearly as hard to find as the proverbial "needle in a haystack." Frequently we read of needles having emerged from the arm or foot of a person after having been traveling through the body for years. Surgeons now use X rays in searching for the slender bits of steel, but even with this aid they are often compelled to give up their efforts as futile.

Fortunately, needle points in the body hardly ever make serious trouble. They hitch their way along in the flesh with every movement of the muscles, until they reach a place beside a bone, where they can rest with freedom from muscle movement, and then their presence is seldom felt, and they may remain there for a lifetime. Or a needle may work its way to the skin, where it will cause a pimple, and may be drawn out with the fingers.

Dog and His Master Beat Way on "Rods."

The Montana prospector and Spitz are in Denver. The former is an expert metalliferous miner. Spitz is a smart-looking fox-terrier dog. The pair reached Denver on the rods beneath a passenger coach after an almost uninterrupted journey of 2,400 miles.

The master of the dog is seeking a job. The terrier is along as his best friend. They travel together, eat together, and sleep together. That is, Spitz has been eating by himself a part of the time since they left Butte, Mont., last month, because his partner often has gone without food that his four-legged chum might eat.

"It's like this," says the Montana prospector, who is sun-tanned and hard as nails from many years about the mines: "The strike of the new union came on against the old union in Butte. Things got so hot there that a great many concluded to look for work elsewhere. I was

among those who left. Of course, I took Spitz with me. He's my one good friend.

"I didn't have enough money for car fare, so I got a roll of cotton rope and made a sling out of it that would hold Spitz under a car. I crawled under a passenger coach, suspended the pup in the sling to a pipe, and we rode to Devil's Lake, N. D., me on a board on the rods, Spitz right above me.

"I didn't find work in Devil's Lake, so we went to Calgary, Alberta, under another passenger coach. There was nothing there, so we crawled under another coach and came to Denver. We covered 2,400 miles on the entire trip, stopping off only when we had to, for food and water."

Spitz is none the worse for his trip. In fact, he seems to have thrived on it, being as sprightly and fat as any fox terrier in a fashionable Capitol Hill home.

An Army of Beards.

A correspondent who succeeded in accompanying the German army in France writes:

"The first impression on approaching the army in the field is of beards—black and yellow, long and short, curly and straight, under the chin and over the chin, shaggy and untrimmed. Never before has there been such a collection of beards as this, and it is no barbers' paradise, either, for no soldier would part with his beard.

"There is no time for shaving in war, and, as one soldier explained it, there is nothing more uncomfortable than the bristles on your chin rubbing against your high collar."

It is a graphic instance of what a campaign means. The niceties of the toilet, which symbolize civilization, are entirely done away with. Cleanliness can come when there is peace; to-day, on with the fight!

Experiments in Deep Mine.

Instructors at the Michigan College of Mines have been conducting interesting experiments in the deep shafts of the copper mines of the Calumet region. It has been noticed that in the shafts at the Tamarack Mine, if some ore or rock were spilled near the surface, men working in the bottom of the shaft a mile below were not much bothered and sometimes only observed "a little dust." It is even stated that a car of broken rock could be dumped into the shaft without injury to men directly underneath, a mile down. The reason is that the rock would not fall straight in the vertical shaft, but would lodge in the sides, on the timbers, which protrude a few inches at intervals.

In the experiments, two metal balls were dropped into the center of the shaft, and an attempt was made to catch them in a box of clay at the bottom. One ball was never found, the other landed in the east wall of the shaft, only a few hundred feet below the surface. It is explained that the earth, revolving from west to east, kept the ball from falling straight down in the hole.

Airman on Death Mission.

In one of the battles around Rheims it became necessary for the Germans to blow up a bridge which was about to be crossed by advancing French troops coming to relieve a beleaguered fort. The only way to destroy the bridge was for an airman to sweep down and drop an exceptionally powerful bomb upon it.

There were twenty-four flyers with that part of the army. A volunteer was asked for, it being first announced that the required task meant sure death to the man undertaking it. Every one of the twenty-four stepped forward without hesitation. Lots were quickly drawn. The chosen man departed without saying farewell to any one. Within five minutes the bridge was in ruins and the aëroplane and its heroic pilot had been blown to pieces. This incident has not been published in the press of Germany because of the fear that it would cause terrible anxiety to the wives of all married German flyers.

Cat and Dog Under Fire.

A correspondent quotes a refugee from Alost, Belgium, when the German attack was at its height, as follows:

"A dog and a cat followed us down the street, and, as the shells burst, the dog went dodging about from one side of the road to the other, but the cat never turned a hair. It minced along behind us, seemingly unafraid.

"The men and the dog made me nervous, but the cat was reassuring. Farther down the whistle of shells followed us again, trying to pick up the Belgian retreat; but before the boom came that time, I managed to break in the door of a shop and get inside.

"It is surprising what one will do in emergencies like that. Fortunately for the cat and dog it was a butcher's shop, and I thought they might as well have some meat as the Germans, so I handed them down a leg of veal and left them eating when I came out."

Kidnaper With Auto Gets Wrong Girl.

A plot to kidnap a girl of wealthy parents in the North Woodward district, of Detroit, Mich., was foiled, temporarily at least, when the man in the plot abducted the wrong girl. That Gladys Martin, fifteen years old, living with her sister, Mrs. Edna Schofield, on Philadelphia Avenue, bears a striking resemblance to the rich girl whom the kidnaper sought is believed by the detectives.

Gladys was taken into an automobile on her way to school, and forced to remain in the car until it stopped at a lonely cottage and taken before a woman accomplice by the man. The woman instantly recognized the mistake the man had made.

"You've got the wrong girl," she said.

Later the kidnaper released Gladys. But first the man had questioned her closely as to how much money her relatives had. He asked who her relatives were and made it plain that ransom was the object of the kidnaping.

Mrs. Kaiser's Awful Time in London Town.

Ejected from a London hotel and hectored by a mob after suspicion as to her nationality had been aroused by her name on the register, Mrs. William Kaiser, of Newark, N. J., is glad to be in America again.

She had been traveling with a party of twenty-five and made all haste to get to England after the war had started. Everything went well until a servant in the hotel noticed the name of "Mrs. William Kaiser" on a trunk. He promptly called his fellow servants and the baggage was demolished.

In one of the trunks the men found some German newspapers the party had collected on their way through Germany. The police were informed.

While the Americans were at dinner, the room was entered by soldiers and the entire number placed under arrest and subjected to an examination.

Every trunk was opened. In many of them were German newspapers, telling of victories to their arms. These were seized, given into the hands of a mob gathered outside, and burned.

After that Mrs. Kaiser was unable to obtain accommodations at the better hotels. Servants followed her about, crying: "Hoch der kaiser!"

Prison Fire Hero is Freed.

Walter Toler, a life-termer in the Mississippi penitentiary, has been granted a discharge by Governor Brewer. His release had been twice recommended by boards of trustees because of his good conduct and heroism in fighting the fire at the Oakley farm, when between thirty and forty negro convicts were burned to death in the cage.

Toler was badly burned in trying to rescue the negroes. Later he prevented the escape of several convicts. He was sentenced from Greenville and was serving a life sentence for the murder of Harry F. Stone, who was shot by Toler when he entered a room in which Toler was sleeping.

Ten Saw Way Out of the Jail.

George Lauchren, held in the Kankakee County, Ill., jail on a robbery charge, had a visit Sunday from a demure-looking young woman, who said she was his wife. She brought him a cake and a few other delicacies, had an hour's visit, and departed.

Tuesday afternoon, about five o'clock, Lauchren left the Kankakee County jail. Nine of his fellow prisoners followed him. They made their exit through an aperture where two steel bars formerly presented an obstacle, and Sheriff Daniel J. Lee believes demure Mrs. Lauchren must have had a couple of saws concealed in the cake that Lauchren enjoyed so much.

Lauchren was captured four hours after his escape, seated in the smoking car of a Big Four train at Woodlawn.

Eugene Ware, another of the jail breakers, was found half buried under the coal in the tender of a locomotive of a freight train going into Monee, twenty miles from Kankakee.

Iron Cross for German Surgeons.

Many German army surgeons are now wearing the iron cross for bravery, having won the insignia by dragging out wounded while exposed to the enemy's fire in the fighting in France and Belgium.

The number of hospital corps in the German army was determined upon the experience in the Russo-Japanese War, in which the losses were by no means so heavy as they are to-day, but where, in a few cases, numbers have been lacking the surgeons, and their assistants have put forth herculean efforts.

Say Chinese Boys Enter Here by Ruse.

Charges of wholesale smuggling of Chinese into the United States, in violation of the Federal exclusion act, have been investigated secretly by a subcommittee of the United States commission on industrial relations. The bureau of immigration also has been investigating the charges, and there may be important developments. Connivance of employees of the Federal immigration service in the matter has been charged. Frank Tape, a Chinese inspector and interpreter, has been arrested at Seattle.

According to the charges made before the commission, Seattle and Boston are the headquarters of those who are accused of having engaged in the smuggling.

The investigation was conducted by Frank P. Walsh, of Missouri, chairman of the commission; Harris Weinstock, of California, and James O'Connell, of the District of Columbia, composing the subcommittee mentioned, and they were accompanied on part of their tour of investigation by Commissioner John B. Lennon, of Illinois.

Most of the evidence obtained by the subcommittee was presented at its sessions in Boston by Thomas Sullivan, attorney for the Massachusetts Laundrymen's Association. He charged that Chinese boys were brought to this country from China as students, exempt from seclusion, and, after they had been matriculated in schools, were taken away and put to work in laundries. According to his testimony, a Chinese living in Seattle, engaged in the patent-medicine business, placed about twenty Chinese boys at Cushing Academy, at Ashburton, Mass., in November of last year. Attorney Sullivan produced evidence tending to show that all these students left the academy for the Christmas holidays, but none of them returned.

Officers of the immigration service said that the students had scattered all over the United States, and that the immigration authorities had been unable to apprehend any of them. The immigration officials are still working on the matter.

The industrial commission obtained evidence at Seattle of a similar incident. In this case testimony showed that two groups of Chinese students, one made up of about forty boys and the other of a lesser number, had been brought from China and placed at an institution in Seattle, but subsequently had disappeared, and had not been apprehended. Evidence was given at the Seattle inquiry tending to show that the Chinese who had placed the students at the Cushing Academy, in Massachusetts, was the same man who had placed the two groups of students in the institution at Seattle. This Chinese, whose name is not divulged, has an American wife, who, according to the evidence, once was engaged in religious missionary work in China.

The subcommittee learned at the Boston hearings that the Massachusetts Laundrymen's Association had raised a fund of $25,000, to be expended in investigating the allegations. The Laundrymen's Association employed Detective Burns to help it get evidence, and some of the Burns operatives testified before the subcommittee.

War Brings a Crisis to Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army here and abroad is facing a crisis, the most severe it has had to meet in its existence, several of the army's leading officers said recently. The financial condition of the army in America is most affected by the war. In Europe the war has practically disrupted the usual industrial and religious activities. More than 10,000 workers and members of the organization are fighting in the ranks. The entire system and operation of the organization have been swept away. A new start must be undertaken after the war.

There are fifty institutions operated by the Salvation Army in New York and vicinity. All of these have been seriously affected. The officials are doubtful if they will be able to care for the poor as usual, though the demand

for assistance this winter promises to be greater than in previous years.

During the Christmas season the army provides for about 300,000 persons. To do this it has always had to draw on its reserve funds. This year it has no reserve. Most of the larger donations and gifts of money to the army here now are for the sufferers in the war zone, and are being sent abroad, for distribution through such parts of the organization as remain intact in the warring countries.

Colonel Alexander M. Damon, national field secretary of the army in New York City, said that while the situation was most serious, he believed the organization in America would be able to hold together and continue some part of its charities and work, at least.

"No other religious organization, except that of the Catholic church, is so greatly affected by the war as the Salvation Army," said Colonel Damon. "Its international character is the cause of that. Its members are fighting in the ranks in Germany, France, and Belgium. Everywhere, except in England, the work of the organization and its actual existence are for the time broken up. Matters are better in England."

Colonel Cox and Colonel Peart joined in the following statement:

"On the continent of Europe conditions are so unfortunate that the work of the organization must be started anew from the foundations. The organization, as a working factor, has ceased to exist in the fighting countries. The homes of the army have been taken for enlisted men.

"Most of our volunteers and members and workers are in the ranks of the various armies. Some of them are fighting each other, as in the case of the Germans and Austrians against the Allies. In Holland are some army leaders caring for the Belgian refugees, but everywhere in Europe the income is cut off. Because of the greater demand there, our usual income is thus affected here. Wherever our workers are still able to give assistance to the sufferers in Europe they are asking for our help.

"The work planned by the army to meet some of the tremendous problems that it is asked to solve must in large part now be abandoned. This will have serious effect on our work in Chicago, Pittsburgh, and many other cities.

"The Salvation Army in America is without reserve funds, and its gifts from the well to do have always been small in number and amount. Churches give little. So hardly more than a hand-to-mouth existence has been possible for some weeks. Most of the money of the army is earned in industrial plants, but these have been well-nigh put out of business. Some collections are received at street meetings, but these have much fallen off."

Freddie Goes Fishing and Catches a Girl.

Little Freddie Goshhorn, aged three, of Cincinnati, Ohio, tired of playing alone in the front yard, evidently asked himself the ancient question: "Which had I rather do or go a-fishing?" Fishing won the point, so he soon found one of his father's fishing lines, and, taking a piece of meat from the family ice box, he promptly proceeded to fish.

He didn't think it at all necessary to look up a river, lake, or ocean for his piscatorial exploit, not yet being a disciple of either Walton or Munchhausen. He simply cast his line out the front window of his parents' third-floor flat. For some time he failed to have any luck, and Freddie, becoming wiser in rapid bounds, began to doubt the fish stories told by his father.

Suddenly he got a bite that an old-time fisherman would call a whale. Freddie pulled and the "fish" let out a scream. He pulled again and a second scream aroused the neighborhood.

Freddie reasoned to himself that he never heard of a fish screaming, so he leaned out of the window to have a look. On the end of his line he saw Mary Hill, aged four, residing on the first floor of the building.

Freddie dropped his line. Neighbors cut the line and Mary Hall was taken to the City Hospital in a patrol wagon, where the fishhook was cut out of her head.

Freddie declares he will catch a fish if he has to buy one and stick it on the hook.

Boy Fishers Land Sea Horse.

That the sea horse exists otherwise than in fables was demonstrated at Gulfport, Miss., when two boys, casting a net for trout and mullets, drew in one of them measuring nine inches. The curious animal has a body, bearing the same relation to a land horse as the fabled mermaid does to a woman. Its upper body has no scales, is of a chestnut color, has a head like a horse, with identical ears, and even a mane, and has two atrophied legs placed where a horse's front legs are, but used by the animal evidently as rudders, to guide its course. It stands up in the water, its head always above the surface. Sea horses have been caught at other places along the coast, but none over four inches had been seen before the one caught here.

Tries Being a Detective.

An ambition to be a detective caused Lewis Schindler, a Chicago restaurant cook and dish washer, to masquerade for a week in the South Clark Street police district as a morals inspector. Twenty-four hours' experience behind the bars has cured him, he says, of ever again wanting to put any person in the same predicament.

The arrest book at the South Clark Street station shows that Schindler, while playing the rôle of a policeman, prosecuted ten persons. Of the ten, all of whom were arraigned before Judge Goodnow, in the Morals Court, some are said to be working out fines at the bridewell.

Policemen all over the city, when they learned of Schindler's escapade, were convulsed with laughter. The South Clark Street police district, from which denizens had fled to escape being arrested by the "demon cop," as Schindler was called, assumed its wonted gayety when it became known that he was only a masquerader.

"I know more about the police business than those guys over at the South Clark Street station give me credit for," said Schindler, when released on bonds.

"Everything will come out all right in the wash. Isch ka bibble. Why don't they go and ask Captain Crippen about me? He told me he thought I would make a good sleuth, and he said he would give me a chance when there was an opening. I just made the opening myself, and I've been pretty busy, too. That's all there is to it."

Before he was unmasked by Sergeant Farrell, Schindler led Detective Sergeant James McCarthy a merry three-hour chase over the district, pointing out alleged gambling places.

"You've got to get busy and clean up things," said Schindler, "or Funkhouser will be after you fellows. I

have nothing to do with gambling houses, but the major told me to report these places to him. Unless there is a general cleaning up, I will have to put some of you fellows in bad."

"I nearly wore out a pair of shoes tramping around with him," said McCarthy. "And to find out that he was only a faker! Isn't it rich? He had all the men in the station jumping sideways and tipping their hats to him. They ought to give him life or else make him chief."

Charles Weeghman, who was Schindler's employer for a year, says:

"I don't know what kind of a detective he would make, but there is no better dish washer in Chicago."

Woman Falls in a Deep Well.

Mrs. Sarah Fosness, of Lake Mills, Iowa, was pumping a pail of water when the center plank of the platform broke and she was plunged to the bottom of the well, into eight feet of water. Mr. Fosness, her husband, is mail carrier out of Lake Mills, and had already gone. The only one at home besides their little baby was Mrs. Fosness' mother sick abed upstairs. The well being over twenty-five feet deep, the woman's screams for help could not be heard, and it was not until over an hour had elapsed that help came.

Beulah Iverson, a little girl, heard a call for help. She saw the broken board at the well, looked down, and discovered Mrs. Fosness. The neighbors were called, and Albert Bolstal was lowered into the well with a rope and supported the woman until more help could arrive, when she was rescued.

Mrs. Fosness displayed rare presence of mind in her trying ordeal, having succeeded in bracing her back against one side of the curb and her feet against the other, while she loosened her apron and fastened it in a loop around a board that had been nailed as a brace to one side of the curbing. She then slipped her arm through the noose and was hanging by her elbow when rescued.

Buzzard Carries off a Dog.

Eagles are said to be game enough and strong enough to carry off almost anything from a man to a cat, but the first instance known when a buzzard carried off a dog was witnessed on a recent afternoon. The incident happened a few miles from Bessemer, Ala.

A very brave little fox terrier was endeavoring to chase off a large buzzard that had alighted on the ground. He only succeeded in making the buzzard fly close to the ground for a short distance. The buzzard stopped on a short stump and waited for the dog, which came barking around the root of the stump.

The buzzard, seeing his chance, jumped from the stump, seized the dog in its mouth and claws, and flew to a thicket near by. The dog made a heroic resistance, but was unable to free himself from the bird's claws.

Girls Helped Dig Trenches.

A dispatch to the Reuter's Telegram Company from Petrograd says:

"To the local peasantry, among them many girls, is attributed in part the failure of the German attempts to cross the Vistula during the recent fighting. The girls aided the Russian soldiers by digging trenches.

"On the initiative of a new English club a movement is on foot to raise a detachment of recruits for the British army. Many Lancashire men employed in cotton mills have volunteered. The force will be known as 'The Pals Detachment.'"

Blind Man Gains His Sight.

A blind man suddenly gained his sight in a restaurant at Pittsburgh, Pa., in a most unlooked-for way. Charles Clarke, of Cleveland, with pencils and other articles to sell, was walking along Federal Street, soliciting aid from pedestrians by means of an "I-am-blind" sign. One man he asked to lead him to a restaurant, and, after getting there, the waiters found it necessary to feed him.

After partaking of the food, the "blind man" was given a bill for thirty cents. Clarke opened his eyes and shouted: "Thirty pump handles!" and then proceeded to create a disturbance, with the result that he was arrested. At a hearing before Magistrate W. H. Robertson, in the Allegheny police station, Clarke was sentenced to pay a fine of fifty dollars or serve ninety days in the workhouse.

Window Gazer Hypnotized.

Rigid as a mummy, Louis A. Albright, a visitor from Canton, Ohio, was found gazing into a necktie shop at Fourth and Spring Streets, Los Angeles, Cal., by the police early in the morning. He was apparently held in a hypnotic trance by an electric globe revolving before a reflector of many colors and many facets. It was only after hours of work by surgeons at the receiving hospital that Albright was restored to full consciousness.

Fortune for Young Inventor.

Ernest Coffey, twenty-seven years old, of Lawton, Okla., has received a check for $10,000 from a big Eastern manufacturing company. The remittance is the first payment for the exclusive rights to the young man's patent on a transmission and mechanical automobile gear shifter. Coffey is to receive an additional $10,000 each year during the life of the patent. In the meantime he is hard at work daily in his workshop and garage at Lawton, and says he will introduce many other new inventions.

Medal for Girl Who Saved Tratn.

For her heroism in saving a Georgia & Florida passenger train from plunging into a burned-out trestle near Douglas, Ga., a few months ago, Miss Jennie Lee Parker has just been presented with a gold medal at the Shepherd School, in Coffee County. The little girl, learning that the trestle would not stand a train's weight, ran along the track and flagged a passenger train just in time to prevent what might have been one of the worst accidents ever known in the State.

Charge of Opium is Shot into Big Buck.

An Adirondack guide dropped into Boonville, north of Rome, N. Y., the other day to lay in his winter supply of provisions, traps, ammunition, and clothing, and told of his ingenious capture, alive, of a big buck.

A man who owns a large deer park in the southern part of the Adirondacks had seen an unusually large buck, that he was very anxious to secure for his preserve, and he offered $100 for it, alive and crated, ready for shipment. All the guides in that section knew of the big deer and made efforts to get it alive.

James Benham went to the nearest village and had the druggist make some pellets of glue, flour, paste, and opium, a trifle larger than buckshot. Then he loaded several shells with them.

The next time he saw the big buck on the runway he sent the contents of both barrels into its side. It ran and he followed it, coming up to it about two hours later. The buck was in a clump of evergreens, fast asleep.

As soon as the hardened mixture so heavily loaded with opium entered the deer's body, it had begun to dissolve, and soon the animal was overcome by sleep.

Benham said the deer had run in a circle and was only a few rods from his camp when it dropped asleep.

It was carried to camp and boxed for shipment, the antlers and hoofs being tied to the sides and bottom of the crate. When the buck awoke, it was well on its way to the private park. Benham got a check for $100 the next day.

Race Horses War Prizes.

Next to the German ships seized by the British government since the outbreak of the war, probably the most valuable prizes of war are the racing stables in England formerly belonging to Germans and Austrians but now the property of the board of agriculture and fisheries. Shortly after the war broke out, a London paper published a list of horses owned by Germans and Austrians and racing under their colors on English tracks. Acting on this hint and profiting by an old act which allows private informers to claim a share of the sale proceeds, a number of citizens brought actions, and horses valued at $500,000 were seized.

Among the horses seized were the stable belonging to Baron Springer and managed by the veteran trainer Butters, at Newmarket. In this stable are Adular and Aides, bred by the Hungarian government stud and lent to Baron Springer for racing purposes only. Adular, valued at $10,000 has not yet been advertised for sale, but Aides and Boland, another member of the same stable, will soon be sold at auction at Newmarket.

This Frog Better Than Mark Twain's.

A six-legged frog that would have made Mark Twain's champion jumping frog stay in deep water has been found at Long Lake by R. S. Rettinger, a grocer of Minneapolis, Minn. This frog has two pairs of jumping legs behind and a first-class pair of alighting legs in front.

Holland's Deadly Secret.

The government of the Netherlands, or Holland, has an effective means of checking the advance of any foe into that country. It is nothing less than the flooding of the better part of the kingdom, which is rendered possible by the fact that it is nearly all below the level of the rivers, of the canals, and of the sea.

The plans for putting the little country under water constitute the chief State secret of Holland—a secret on the preservation of which her independence and safety may be said to depend. William of Orange flooded the country in 1574, and by so doing drove out the Spanish invaders. The same policy was adopted on the occasion of the French invasion of 1672. It was resorted to in 1787, when the Prussians marched into Holland, but not quickly enough, and, before the country could be put under water, the enemy had managed to reach and take Amsterdam.

In those days the means employed for cutting the dams and dikes were crude and slow. But the developing of the science of hydraulic engineering and of irrigation has enabled the government of Queen Wilhelmina to inaugurate devices which are a profound secret, but thanks to which the mere movement of a lever at Amsterdam is sufficient to open every dike and dam in Holland simultaneously; to put under water, within the space of a few hours, the whole country, from Naarden, on the Zuyder Zee, to Geertruidenberg, at the mouth of the Meuse. The northwest corner of the kingdom, with The Hague, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam, would thus be converted into a well-nigh impregnable fortified island, only approachable by shallow barges and small boats.

Cigarette Starts Trouble.

A quarrel over a cigarette which started in Willisville, Ill., resulted in: A revolver duel, the murder of one man, the wounding of two men, and the lynching of another.

The climax to the quarrel came when a crowd of masked men sprang from the sides of a country road, covered Sheriff Bresner, of Willisville, with revolvers, took from him his prisoner, Albert Ciazza, and poured a broadside of shots into him before the sheriff's eyes.

Ciazza was an Italian miner, one of two brothers who engaged in the revolver duel with two American miners, Willis Adams and Ben Cooper.

The trouble had its inception at Willisville in ill feeling between Italian and American miners employed in the mines of the Willis Coal & Mining Company.

Cooper and Adams were accosted by Sam Ciazza, who asked one of the Americans for a cigarette. Sam was accompanied by his brother Albert. The Americans resented the manner in which he made the request, and, after a few words, revolvers were drawn.

The battle was over when Bresner and several citizens arrived. Sam Ciazzi lay dead in the street, three bullets having struck him. Cooper was unconscious, suffering from what his physicians say will be a fatal wound. Adams is wounded in the abdomen and there is little chance for him to live.

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